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AUTHOR Mullen, Dana
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ABSTRACT

According to a 1981 study, the Life Skills Program that was developed by Saskatchewan New Start over a decade ago is still very much needed to improve the life situation of economically disadvantaged adults. At present, the overall rationale for the Life Skills Program is contained in collections of articles written at successive stages of program development by numerous developers who discussed the program from different points of view. Emerging from a British study of models for social and life skills development are seven models. These are the deficiency model, the competency model, the information-based model, the socialization model, the experiential model, the reflective model, and the counseling model. Features from all seven models can be discovered in the Life Skills Program. A critique of two sets of life skills training materials--a set of lessons developed at Saskatchewan New Start (SNS) and published in the "Life Skills Coaching Manual" and a set of lessons written at the Occupational and Career Analysis and Development (OCAD) Branch of Employment and Immigration Canada--indicates that while neither set of lessons can, in itself, fulfill the objectives of the Life Skills Program, they could and should be used together. (MN)

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a conceptual framework for the life skills program

DANA MULLEN

Prepared for
Occupational and Career Analysis
and Development Branch
Employment and Immigration Canada
1981

CE 031 875

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PREFACE

The process of developing a training program is very much like the process of acquiring life skills. As individuals make a start, by trying to master relatively simple new behaviours and reflecting on the consequences, they begin to understand more about their own real needs. The more skills they learn, the clearer their understanding of themselves becomes.

In its original developmental period at Saskatchewan New Start, the Life Skills course went through repeated cycles of experimental use: try-outs of a lesson; reflection on the consequences; a clearer understanding of the problems; a changed lesson in response to the clarification.

Once a learning process of this nature has been initiated and given momentum during a period of intensive effort, it does not cease just because that phase of its life comes to a close. In a sense, every time a Life Skills lesson has been conducted in the last ten years, it was being tried out. Reflection has brought a deeper understanding of the needs for life skills.

In the cyclical process, understanding is followed by renewed action. New Life Skills lessons have been prepared in response to new insights. But how is the new training material to fit harmoniously into the whole Life Skills structure?

The purpose of this paper is to lay the groundwork for new structural developments. The first part is a discussion of the needs for life skills, as they are understood after a decade of experience. In the second part, a comprehensive model that unites the principles of Life Skills theory is explained. Finally, in Part Three, two sets of Life Skills training materials are studied in the light of both theory and needs, and recommendations for developmental tasks are made. The process continues.

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Part One: NEEDS

A Study of the Needs for Life Skills of Persons Referred for Life Skills Training

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATIONS OF NEEDS

The Impetus for Developing a Life Skills Program

The Life Skills program was developed by Saskatchewan New Start as part of its total mandate to create innovative and effective methods for improving the life situation of economically disadvantaged adults.

The impetus for developing a Life Skills program has been explained in an historical sketch (Himsl[c], p.6). The expansion of business and industry into impoverished areas of Canada during the post-war period, it was found, did not necessarily confer the benefits of employment on the residents of those regions. All too often, skilled personnel had to be brought in from outside because no local people had the required qualifications. Job training and upgrading courses proved to be an inadequate solution, for drop-out rates before training was completed were high.

> "Many disadvantaged, on returning to the training institution, found themselves in a situation little changed from the one they had left years before. The texts which they studied were the very ones the children used; often, the school made few adaptations to their adulthood, which served only to reinforce the inferiority they felt as a result of youthful failure; they lacked communication skills and confidence, and did not convey their uncertainty to those in charge; sometimes, overcome with personal problems and unable to discuss them with people in an essentially inhospitable environment, they chose an easy way out and stopped training. This response to training often fitted the pattern of the individual's work history.
>
> "The disadvantaged person seemed to lack not only technical and vocational skills, but some kind of coping skills as well..."

Study of the Literature

A study of the literature concerning disadvantaged adults confirmed these generalizations about the inadequacy of their coping skills and built up a formidable picture of multiple problems that prevented individuals from getting out of the rut of chronic unemployment, or underemployment, and dependence on some form of social assistance.

A great deal of specific detail was found in the research of Winthrop Adkins and Sydney Rosenberg, who had investigated the problems experienced by the disadvantaged adults with whom they were working in New York City, conducting hundreds of in-depth interviews in order to find out "where they hurt, what they were afraid of, what they were anxious about, what made them feel alienated and depressed" (Lee, p.80).

Adkins believed that the reason these adults did not respond well to the usual type of counselling through unstructured group work, even though they had the kind of learning difficulties (such as anxiety and lack of confidence) that indicated a need for counselling, was that they simply did not know the strategies that exist for changing situations. Their lack of response was due to a cognitive element in their problems in addition to an emotional one.

Since the initial theoretical formulation for Life Skills training was made by Adkins and Rosenberg (Conger[b], p.1), their primary research was bound to be influential during the early

stages of course development at Saskatchewan NewStart in the task of assessing the needs for skills among the disadvantaged adults of the region.

Observations during Experimental Development

As soon as its own course development was under way, however, Saskatchewan NewStart could study the needs for life skills directly, through the background information about themselves provided by the students in experimental classes and through direct observation of their response to the lessons. Between 1969 and 1972 the cycle of experimentation, revision and evaluation was repeated several times, with the cooperation of some 400 Life Skills students (Conger[a], p.i).

In this way, such a conclusive body of evidence was obtained that the often-quoted passage describing the inadequacies of these adults could be published with confidence that it was grounded in fact (Himsl[b], p.13):

> "Study of the literature, and direct observation reveal that many disadvantaged have a complex, interlocking set of inadequate behaviors. Some lack the skills needed to identify problems, to recognize and organize relevant information, to describe reasonable courses of action, and to foresee the consequences. They often fail to act on a rationally identified course of action, submitting rather to actions based on emotion or authority. Often they do not benefit from experience since they do not evaluate the results of their actions once taken, and display fatalistic rationalizations of the consequences. They lack the self-confidence to develop their abilities, and have low, or often surprisingly unrealistic aspiration levels.

> "Many disadvantaged have low levels of participation in the society around them; few belong to voluntary organizations; the affairs of the larger society do not attract their participation. They lack effective ways of seeking help from each other and from agencies already in existence, although some form of public assistance provides much of their income. Long periods of unemployment or frequent job changes mark their work history. They have ineffective interpersonal relationships and lack basic communication skills; they do not use feedback effectively, often thinking of it as hurtful personal criticism. As a result of characteristic marital instability, women often raise the children by themselves."

To paraphrase Shakespeare, when problems come, they come not single spies but in battalions.

After observing successions of Life Skills groups at the research centre, developers were able to make more detailed comments about the students in relation to the five areas of life that generated content for the experimental course (Himsl[b], p.15):

SELF: Students often had distorted views of themselves, exaggerating their lack of skills and showing little understanding of their abilities relative to other people. They were apprehensive in non-threatening situations. In particular, they allowed other people to dominate them.

FAMILY: Students were often unable to work out marital quarrels in satisfactory ways. They lacked skills for dealing with their children helpfully, being inconsistent in discipline, for instance, and not knowing how to give their children the information and moral support that adolescents need.

LEISURE: Students usually had a severely limited repertoire of recreational activities and did not know how to plan the use of their leisure time. For many, alcohol dominated in one way or another.

COMMUNITY: All the students had dropped out of school. Many had spent time in penal institutions or at least had police records. They showed limited participation in community affairs, even though many had drawn heavily on the services of Canada Manpower Centres and public health and welfare agencies.

JOBS: The observations are worth quoting:

> "...The students often had little knowledge of ways many people use to find employment. They had only vague notions of what employers want in the way of maintaining effective working relations on the staff. Many did not accept criticism well, and found that when called upon to give it to others, say as part of a supervisory responsibility, they could not do it. Typically, many of the Life Skills students do not know how to present themselves in the most favorable light; they fail to give a full account of their work experience, or if they do give it, they present it badly. Others experienced frustration because they have set unrealistic employment goals for themselves."(p.16)

Information from Users outside the Research Centre

When program development passed into the dissemination stage, reports from coaches conducting Life Skills groups outside the Prince Albert research centre contributed to the understanding of needed skills. Berscheid, for instance, reported that after repeating instructions in very simple language twice to the entire group, he still had to restate to each dyad the procedure they were supposed to follow (Berscheid, p. 105). Furthermore, even in the final lessons of the course, he noted that when he wrote a lesson objective on the flip chart but did not expand on its content, no one really understood it (p. 118). His group demonstrated a need for learning how to pay attention with the mind, as well as

with the body, and how to assimilate into understanding the meaning of language, both oral and written, that is somewhat more abstract in character than the accustomed level of a Life Skills student's normal conversation.

Needs of Special Clienteles

A further undertaking during the experimental development of the Life Skills course was to investigate its possible use with special clienteles. In a detailed study of the problems and needed life skills of adolescents, a lengthy inventory of problems that "...some adolescents have or all adolescents have some of the time" (Warren[b], p.120) was set out under headings, such as physical aspects, self concept, families, leisure, values, vocation, and so on.

Although the proposed analysis of the skills needed for coping with these problems was deferred until some later time, something useful can be learned by reflecting on this list of potential problem areas. The inventory is so extensive as to be discouraging. No finite course could ever hope to inculcate the particular skills for dealing with the infinite number of possible problematic situations. The solution in Life Skills program development was to concentrate on generic skills in the expectation that these could be transferred from training experiences to a wide range of life experiences. The point is that only by looking below the situational surface is it possible to see that the most valuable skills are those that lie deep enough within the individual to permit their application to whatever problem arises in everyday living.

Skills Needed to Profit from Training

A special set of skills was identified as needs of the students within the training situation. Because most of the incoming students did not understand the value of a group approach for learning and helping one another, lessons were required early in the course that would create a learning group and develop a readiness for learning by that means. Effective listening skills were characteristically lacking; therefore, to ensure that students could profit from the training experiences that would follow, exercises to develop these needed skills were introduced almost as soon as a course started.

Similarly, the need for students to see themselves interacting with others suggested the use of videotape recording. Consequently, one of the first lessons provides for training in the "hands-on" use of VTR equipment.

Another realization was that the course content had to be made as interesting and immediately rewarding to the participants as possible because "any adult needing basic education and Life Skills will probably need some bolstering of his motivation - motivation to enrol, to learn, to persevere, and to use what he learns" (Warren[a], p.120).

Recognition of Need

One important discovery was that the students in the experimental courses rarely recognized their own needs for life skills.

> "The typical incoming Life Skills student is not expecting or interested in Life Skills training; he comes for the basic education. The typical attitude might be expressed as, 'I don't need Life Skills. I've made it this far in life without this course. All I need is grade 10 and I'll be set'." (Warren[a], p.121)

The Effects of the NewStart Experimental Approach

To the experimental character of program development at Saskatchewan NewStart is due the credit for an interesting and valuable growth in understanding what the needs for life skills really are.

At first, according to the director of Saskatchewan New Start during program development (quoted in Lee, p.83), the course tried to respond to its perceptions of the students' needs with a strong emphasis on human relations and communications. To a satisfying degree, the students appeared to learn and practise a number of important interpersonal skills. However, "...when our researchers then followed the students up afterwards, they found that they still had a great many problems - problems in terms of employment, in terms of serious family relationships, legal situations, and so on."

It was not that new problems had been identified. On the contrary, the difficulties referred to in the quotation above were some of the very problems for which the course was originally conceived. The new element was the realization that the students' inability to communicate well with other people constituted a need at a deeper level than had originally been anticipated. It was

necessary, but not sufficient, to train the students in good interpersonal skills. Therefore, going from an almost purely human relations program to one in which there was a balance of human relations, behavioural skills and knowledge, the Life Skills developers shifted to a problem solving model.

The development of training in problem solving was a response to match the deeper level at which needs were seen to lie. In addition to learning modelled interpersonal behaviours, the students would also learn, by simplified methods, to exercise their own mental powers in tackling their problems.

If only the Life Skills lessons themselves were considered, it would seem that the study of student needs had stopped at that point, but there was more. In Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching, the concept of Balanced Self-Determinism (BSD) is presented (p.37). Balanced Self-Determined individuals are able to exercise their rights without denying the rights of others. In contrast, Other-Determined individuals passively look to someone else (or to some institution) to make decisions on their behalf, while Selfish-Determined individuals aggressively achieve their own goals at the expense of others. Typically, Other-Determined behaviour leaves a person hurt, anxious and inhibited; Selfish-Determined behaviour produces a residue of guilt; in both cases, the sense of personal worth is diminished.

Coaches for Life Skills courses, who study the BSD concept during their training period, are supposed to recognize its validity in their own experience, applying its principles in their personal lives and in Life Skills coaching.

An explanation for the introduction of an entirely new concept in the coach training manual, even when coaches do not have to teach it in any lesson, may be that the ongoing process of experimental development revealed a yet-deeper need: the need to recognize one's self to be of value - as valuable, basically, as every other person. Without this sense of self worth, and the parallel understanding of the worth of others, individuals are not likely to put their problem solving and human relations skills into practice under any but the simplest and least stressful conditions.

Although the deepening insights into student needs were highly worthwhile, the mid-development shifts and additions have produced a confusing inconsistency between the content of the lessons and the rationale of the entire program (including the plan for coach training), along with a lack of clarity concerning overall goals.

In discussing the shift to a problem solving model, the New Start director remarked, "I think that this was a great step forward, but I'm not yet sure if we have yet developed the most ideal balance of things." A continued effort to understand the true nature of needs for life skills may make another step towards that ideal possible by facilitating the construction of a model for an integrated and consistent Life Skills program.

A RENEWED INVESTIGATION OF THE NEEDS FOR LIFE SKILLS

Experience from a Decade of Use

More than a decade has now passed since the Life Skills course was first developed. During that time the course has been very widely adopted throughout Canada, and its influence has extended well beyond national borders.

The uses to which the Life Skills course is put are many. Just as it received its initial impetus from problems related to employment, so today large numbers of individuals are referred for Life Skills training to a Basic Job Readiness Training program. Since these BJRT programs are open to both men and women of any adult age, they can probably be regarded as the most representative of Life Skills clienteles.

However, the course has been adapted for use with special groups, who share with BJRT students many of the same needs but also have particular problems that necessitate additions, deletions or a change of emphasis in course content and approach. Some of these special clienteles are:

Mental health groups: For example, Riediger (p. 5) describes rehabilitation programs for former psychiatric patients and preventative programs for individuals "at risk needing intermittent counselling services and social assistance."

Women's groups: The Toronto YWCA, for example, offers Life Skills courses for groups of sole-support mothers

and women encountering difficulty in losing weight.

Corrections: Life Skills training has been conducted with prisoners in institutions, ex-prisoners and parolees.

Adolescents: Referrals for Life Skills courses have included early school leavers, teen-agers regarded as "delinquents" and 16-plus students re-entering the school system or hunting for work.

Native peoples: Life Skills courses held in native communities require a specialized orientation because of problems related to culture, education, employment opportunity and language.

The wealth of experience accumulated during the past years of Life Skills training, conducted across Canada under widely varying conditions and for many purposes, is a source from which an enlarged understanding of the needs for skills can be gained.

The 1981 Questionnaire

In an attempt to discover whether the original assessment of needs for the Life Skills course is still valid and adequate, a three-part questionnaire, entitled "The Needs of Persons Referred for Life Skills Training." was presented to a group of trained and experienced coaches. It incorporated material from the program while encouraging new viewpoints and observations.

Description of the Questionnaire

Part A. The first section is a modification of the Life Skills Check List, a student activity in the lesson "Surveying Life Skills." In the lesson itself, the students are asked to check whether they have or do not have the skills to cope with a long list of specific problematic situations. In the questionnaire, however, the coaches were requested to indicate whether FEW, MANY or MOST of their students actually possessed those skills at the beginning of training.

It is recognized that some difficulty may have been encountered in making a single response to the double question about having a skill and using that skill. Although a skill is defined by "ability to do," that is, by demonstrated behaviour, a person may nevertheless be able to demonstrate certain behaviours (for example, playing a piano, driving a car carefully, looking attentively at the person to whom he is speaking, fighting fairly), and yet on any given occasion may forget to use those behaviours or even choose not to use them. Since the questions about the items in the Life Skills Check List combine knowing how or what to do and doing it, requiring the student to make a single assessment of himself, the coaches were in fact being asked to judge whether a skill had been acquired to the "habitual" level of learning (Smith and Williams, p. 88). Such a judgement is difficult to make, especially in attempting to generalize over large numbers of students.

However, the advantage of including in the questionnaire an exercise that virtually all Life Skills students have done and

which therefore must have provided a great deal of information and understanding to the coaches, outweighed the disadvantages.

Because the situations in the check list were originally worded in a positive way, asking students whether they have the required skills, a coach response of FEW implies a widespread lack of that skill.

Part B. In contrast to the situation-specific approach of the check list in Part A, the second section of the questionnaire utilized Himsl's generalized description of the disadvantaged population, quoted on page 4 of this paper. The coaches were requested to indicate whether MOST, MANY or FEW of their students exhibited these inadequate behaviours when they entered the course. Since the listed behaviours are regarded as deficiencies, a coach response of MOST suggests a widespread lack of life skill.

After each item in these first two parts, a space was provided for any brief explanatory or elaborative comments the coach wished to make.

Part C. Finally, the coaches were asked to add observations about deficient life skills that they felt were not adequately pointed out by the items in Parts A and B.

Informants

The coaches who cooperated in filling out these questionnaires are members of the Ontario Committee on Life Skills Coach and Trainer Training. Membership in this working committee is

evidence of their high qualifications and extensive experience.

The response of the coaches to this request for assistance was excellent. In the seven completed questionnaires that were returned, careful thought had obviously been given to the answers. The explanatory comments and additional observations were illuminating, making the checked judgements more meaningful. Their help in this study is much appreciated.

Questionnaire Results

The judgements of the coaches concerning the skills and deficiencies their referred students had or did not have at the time of entry into a Life Skills course are recorded graphically on the following pages in Table 1.

Whenever a coach differentiated between having and using a skill, the split response is indicated. Also, if a coach remarked on whether an inadequacy was severe or moderate. the observation is noted above a square on the graph.

TABLE 1

Part A. Life Skills Check List

(Coach judgements concerning numbers of students referred for Life Skills training who DID HAVE the skills required for the situations when they entered the course)

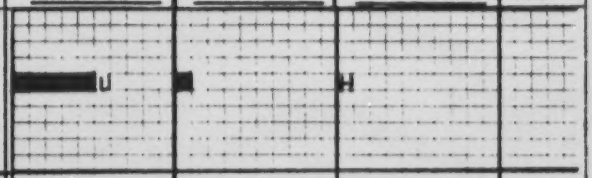
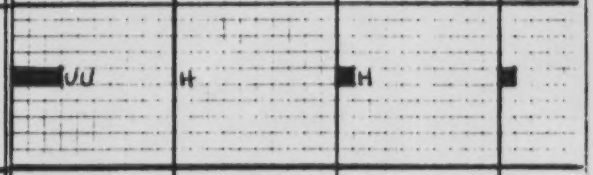
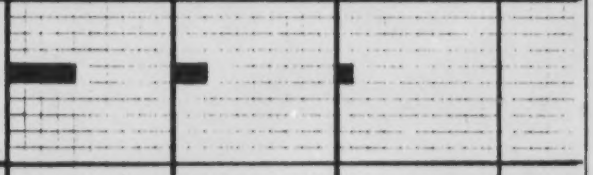
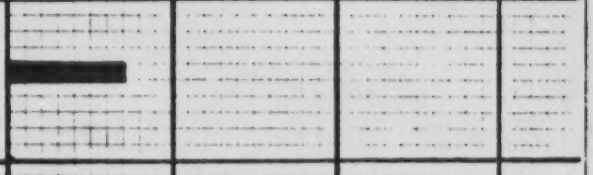
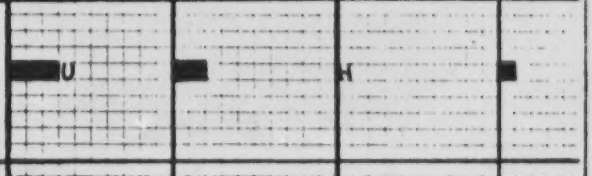
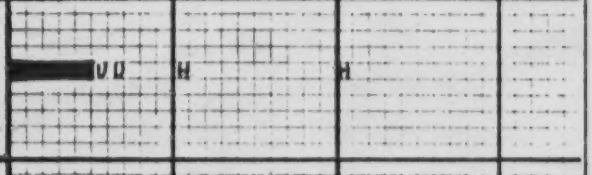
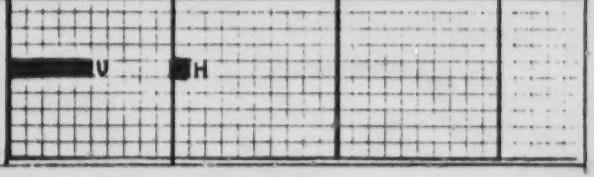
H: Had skill, U: Used skill, Each square: 1 coach.
N.A.: Not Applicable Number of coaches: 7

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
1. You are late for work. The boss is mad and tells you that you don't do a lot of things right. You know what to do and you do it.				
2. You fight with your wife and you know she is right. You know what to do and you do it.	U	H		
3. You and a friend are having a beer. You know you should go home. He coaxes you to have "one more for the road." You know what to do and you do it.				
4. You visit strange towns without money or friends. You want help. You know what to do and you do it.		U	H	
5. You have just had a chance for a job. The boss asks you for references. You know what to do and you do it.				
6. You helped a friend fix his house. He compliments you and says nice things about you. You are embarrassed. You know what to do and you do it.				
7. Your marriage is not working out. You fight all the time and feel it is best to separate for a while. You know what to do and you do it.	U		H	
8. You want to meet new people but you don't want to get into any trouble. You know where to go and what to do, and you do it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
9. You are in a pub when a fight breaks out at the next table. You try to stop it. You are arrested. You know what to do and you do it.				
10. You want a job. Canada Employment tells you there are no jobs available. You decide to find out for yourself. You know what to do and you do it.				
11. Your friend does some little thing that annoys you. It annoys others too. You think he would stop it if he knew it bothered people. You decide to tell him about it. You know what to say and you say it.				
12. You are (or know) an unmarried mother. You (or your friend) need help in supporting the child. You know where to get help and you ask for it.				
13. You want to find something fun to do but everything you think of seems to need money. You decide there must be some interesting things to do without money. You know what to do and do it.				
14. You can't find your wallet. You think someone stole it. You want the police to start an investigation. You know what to do and you do it.				
15. You feel your boss has treated you unfairly. You want to talk to him about it but don't want to lose your job. You know what to do and you do it.				
16. You have been asked to make a speech at a community club meeting. You know how to plan a speech and you give it.				
17. You are having trouble making ends meet from one pay day to the next. You always seem to run out of money three days before you get paid. You know how to plan a budget and you stick to it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
18. You like to play poker once in a while but don't have the money to play often. You can plan when to play and how much to spend, and you stick to your plan.				
19. You want to make a motion at a meeting. You know what to do and you do it.				
20. You don't like your job. You want to quit but don't want to spoil your chances for another job. You know what to do and you do it.				
21. You think you (or a friend you know) have a drinking problem. You try to quit drinking but always weaken. You know where to get help and you go there.	U		H	
22. You have children to support. You do not have a husband (wife) to help you. No one understands your problems. You know where to go to find help from others with the same problems and you go	U	H		
23. You know how to make friends and you keep them.				
24. You have been charged with an offense you didn't do. You need legal help. You know what to do and you do it.		U	H	
25. You apply for a job. There are many forms to fill in. You know what to do and you do it.				
26. You've lost a job; you owe money; your wife says you drink too much; your child is sick. Problems keep piling up. You know what to do and you do it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
27. You know how to shop wisely and get the best value for your money. You stick to your plans to shop wisely without buying things you don't really need.				
28. Friends drop into your house every evening for a drink. You would like to have some time with your family or to do other things. You know what to do and you do it.				
29. Your neighbour's house burned down, and you want to organize a community project to help them. You know what to do and you do it.				
30. You have a job you like but there are other employees you can't stand, and you have to work with them. You know what to do and you do it.				
31. You wait for a bus in the bus depot. A man makes a pass at you (another man). You know what to do and you do it.				
32. You and your husband (wife) have all the children you think you can support. You don't want any more babies. You know what to do and you do it.				
33. You want to start a hobby (e.g. painting, writing, building a boat, gourmet cooking). You know how to get started and you do it.				
34. You have to organize a party. You need a liquor license. You know where to get one and you get it.				
35. You have to speak to a union meeting. You know what to do and you do it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
36. You have tried some drugs and find you want more. You might get "hooked." You know where to get help and you get it.				
37. Your child is not doing well at school and is getting into trouble in the community. You wonder what is upsetting him. You know how to find out and you help him.				
38. Your teenagers complain about nothing to do and not enough money to spend. You want to help them have fun that won't cost money. You know what to do and you do it.				
39. You would like to join a group to take part in sports, the arts, or other recreational activities. You know where to go to find out about clubs and about how to join them, and you do it.				
40. You have a new job. You want to look your best but haven't had much experience shopping for clothes. You haven't much money but want to get clothes that are in style. You know what to do and you do it.				
41. You have a problem and you ask for help. The person you ask is blunter than you expected him to be. You handle the comments he makes.				
42. You live in a rented house that needs fixing. Your landlord keeps putting you off. You know what to do and you do it.				
43. You have nosy neighbours and are sick of their gossiping. You know what to do and you do it.				
44. You have a hobby you really like. You'd like to have a job that was as interesting. You decide to find out about different jobs. You know what to do and you do it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
45. You know what you want to do with your life. You have goals you think you can reach. You know what to do and you do it.				
46. You know what you would like for your family. You know how to go about getting it and you do it.	U	H		
47. You know what you want to do in your leisure time. You can plan it and do it.				
48. You like the community you live in and want to help keep it a good place for your family to live in. You know what to do and you do it.	U	H		
49. You know of a job you want. You know how to apply and you do it.				
50. You have a problem and ask for help. You know how to accept help and you do it.	U		H	
51. You have not paid your rent. The bailiff comes to move your furniture out on the street. You know what to do and you do it.				
52. You are unemployed and around the house all day. You know how to keep busy and you do it.				
53. You have job skills but can't find a job in that line of work. You think you would do better in another line of work. You know what to do and you do it.				

Situations	FEW Students	MANY Students	MOST Students	N. A.
54. Your wife feels labour pains. You have to get her to the hospital. You can't afford a taxi or an ambulance. You know what to do and you do it.				
55. Your children have a school holiday and you have a day off. You decide to enjoy the day with your family. You know what to do and you do it.	U	H		

Part B. Inadequate Behaviours

(Coach judgements concerning numbers of students referred for Life Skills training who DID EXHIBIT the listed behaviours or deficiencies when they entered the course)

S: Severe inadequacy. M: Moderate inadequacy. Each square: 1 coach

Behaviours/Deficiencies	MOST Students	MANY Students	FEW Students	N. A.
1. Inability to: (a) identify problems;	S			
(b) recognize and organize relevant information;	S			
(c) describe reasonable courses of action;	S			
(d) foresee the consequences of their actions.	S			
2. Failure to act on a rationally identified course of action, basing their actions instead on emotion or authority.		S		

Behaviours/Deficiencies	MOST Students	MANY Students	FEW Students	N. A.
3. Failure to evaluate the results of their actions, rationalizing the consequences fatalistically.				
4. Lack of self confidence to develop their abilities.				
5. Low or unrealistic levels of aspiration.				
6. Low level of participation in the affairs of the larger society surrounding them.				
7. Low level of participation in voluntary organizations.				
8. Insufficient use of effective ways of seeking help from each other and from community agencies.				
9. Long periods of unemployment in life.				
10. Frequent job changes.				
11. Ineffective interpersonal relationships.				

Behaviours/Deficiencies	MOST Students	MANY Students	FEW Students	N. A.
12. Lack of basic communications skills.	5			
13. Ineffective use of feedback, often regarding it as hurtful personal criticism.	5			
14. Marital instability.		6		
15. Problems with the use of alcohol, so that personal life is adversely affected.		6		
16. Problems with other drugs, so that personal life is adversely affected.		6		

Results by Clienteles

Because it would be helpful to learn if the needs for life skills differ substantially according to the type of clientele, the questionnaire results were studied from this point of view.

Of the seven coaches, three stated that they had especially concentrated on BJRT students; one reported on teen-agers and one on groups of sole-support mothers. The coach judgements about students in these three clienteles are shown in Table 2 on the following pages.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Three Clienteles

Coach Judgements of Implied Needs for Life Skills among BJRT, Teen-age, and Sole-Support Mothers Groups

X: 1 coach judgement

H: Had skill U: Used skill S: Severe M: Moderate

Part A	BJRT Students (3 coaches)				Teen-agers (1 coach)				Sole-Support Mothers (1 coach)			
Situation #	Number of students judged to have the required skills											
	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.
1	xxx				x				x			
2	x	xx			x				U	H		
3	xx	x			x				x			
4	x	x	x		x					x		
5	xx		x			x			x			
6	xx		x			x			x			
7	xx	x			x				U		H	
8	xxx				x				x			
9	xx	x			x				x			
10	xxx				x				x			
11	xx	x				x			U	H		
12	x	x	x		x					x		
13	xxx				x					x		
14	xx	x			x					x		
15	xxx				x				x			
16	xxx				x				S			
17	xxx				x					x		
18	xx	x			x					x		
19	xxx				x				S			

Part A	BJRT Students (3 coaches)				Teen-agers (1 coach)				Sole-Support Mothers (1 coach)			
	Number of students judged to have the required skills											
Situation #	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.
20	xx	x			x				x			
21		xxx			x				S			
22	x	xx						x	S			
23	xxx					x			S			
24		xx	x			x				x		
25	xx	x			x				x			
26	xxx				x				x			
27	xxx				x					x		
28	xx		x		x				x			
29	xxx							x		x		
30	xxx				x				x			
31	xxx				x					x		
32		xxx						x	x			
33	xxx				x					x		
34	x	x	x		x				x			
35	xxx							x	x			
36	xx	x			x				S			
37	xx		x					x	S			
38	xx	x						x	x			
39	xxx				x				S			
40	x	x	x		x				S			
41	xxx				x				S			
42	xx	x						x	x			
43	xxx				x				U		H	

Part A	BJRT Students (3 coaches)				Teen-agers (1 coach)				Sole-Support Mothers (1 coach)			
Situation #	Number of students judged to have the required skills											
	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.	FEW	MANY	MOST	N.A.
44	xx	x			x				U	H		
45	xx	x				x			x			
46	xxx							x	x			
47	x	xx				x			x			
48	xxx				x					x		
49	xx	x			x				S			
50	x	x	x		x				x			
51	xxx							x	x			
52	xx	x			x				S			
53	xx	x			x				S			
54	xx		x					x		x		
55	x	xx						x	U	H		

Part B	Number of students judged to exhibit inadequate behaviours											
Behaviours	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.
1(a)	x	x	x		x					x		
1(b)	xx	x			x				x			
1(c)	x	xx			x				x			
1(d)	xx	x			x					x		
2	xx	x			x				x			
3	xx	x			x				x			
4	xxx				x				S			
5	xxx				x				S			

Part B Behaviours	BJRT Students (3 coaches)				Teen-agers (1 coach)				Sole-Support Mothers (1 coach)			
	Number of students judged to exhibit inadequate behaviours											
	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.	MOST	MANY	FEW	N.A.
6	xxx				x					x		
7	xxx				x				x			
8		xx	x		x				M			
9	x	xx						x	x			
10	x	xx			x							x
11	xx	x			x				x			
12	xx	x			x				x			
13	xx		x		x				S			
14	x	xx						x	S			
15		xx	x			x				x		
16			xxx			x			S			

Problems of Interpretation

The subjective nature of coach judgements necessitates a cautious interpretation of questionnaire results, avoiding the temptation to read too much into each assessment. However, given the depth and breadth of the informants' experience, it is fair to look for tendencies and emphases in their responses.

A more acute problem stems from the Life Skills Check List itself, which does not actually identify skills but only implies them, by describing situations which a person could cope with only if he possessed certain skills.

Furthermore, some items imply a complex of skills rather than a single, isolatable skill. An example is A-27:

> You know how to show wisely and get the best value for your money. You stick to your plans to shop wisely without buying things you don't really need.

In the statements of A-27 are implied, by one possible analysis, the skill of making a plan, the skill of differentiating between needs and wants, the skill of recognizing good value and the ability of persevering.

In trying to identify the skills implied in the situations, it might seem easy to use the S-F-L-C-J code of the Life Skills lesson, the code that points out for the students the five areas of life that generated content for the course: Self, Family, Leisure, Community and Job. In the original check list printed for student use, each situation is marked with an appropriate code letter, and after completing the list, the students are instructed to add up the skills they have and do not have under the headings

of S-Questions, F-Questions, and so on. One might reasonably assume that inability to cope with a situation in an "S-Question" means that a skill related to Self is involved whereas inability to handle the situation in a "C-Question" means that a skill related to Community is lacking.

The questionnaire responses reveal how misleading that facile approach would be. Consider, for example, the following items:

A-16. You have been asked to make a speech at a community club meeting. You know how to plan a speech and you give it. (Code: S)

A-35. You have to speak to a union meeting. You know what to do and you do it. (Code: J)

At heart, the same skills of planning and presenting a speech to an organized group meeting are at issue in both situations. A skill lies in doing an action and not in the place where the action is done. But if that is true, why did only six informants judge that few entrants into Life Skills courses had the skill for A-35 while all seven informants judged that few students had the skill for A-16? Table 2 provides the explanation. The "Not Appropriate" response concerning teen-agers is logical, in the sense that teen-agers rarely speak to union meetings.

Life Skills beginners, who are almost certainly not accustomed to descriptions of skills worded in abstract terms, require the concrete situations in order to think about what they can do, but an analysis of the skills that are needed to cope with a situation cannot look to the situational content as a guide.

A Composite Portrait

Some understanding of what skills are really lacking can be gained by building up a composite portrait of the typical entrants in a Life Skills course and observing what they can and cannot do. For this purpose, the explanatory remarks of the coaches are helpful and enlightening.

The most widespread deficiencies can be assumed in cases where all seven informants agreed that most of their students had inadequate skills and behaviours. Characteristically, then, the students are:

* unable to find jobs for themselves;
* unable to plan and give a speech or make a motion at a meeting;
* unable to deal with a multiplicity of problems that have piled up;
* unable to solve problems of personal relationships at work;
* unable to handle blunt feedback;
* unable to find and join clubs, even though they would like to;
* lacking in self confidence to develop their abilities.

To this first list may be added the cases in which six informants agreed that most of their students are:

* unable to handle an argument with the boss;
* unable to resist coaxing to continue drinking;
* unable to find interesting things to do without money;
* unable to quit a job without spoiling their chances for another;

* unable to make and keep friends;

  (One coach differentiated between making friends, which constituted a serious problem, and keeping friends, which the students could do.)

* unable to start a new hobby, even though they would like to;

* unable to apply for a job that is known about;

* unable to use feedback effectively;

* unable to deal with friends who usurp time wanted for self and family;

* unable to speak to a union meeting;

* unable to find out about interesting jobs;

  (Comment: "The issue is self confidence.")

Six informants also agreed that most of their students:

* have a low, or unrealistic, level of aspiration;

* have a low level of participation in voluntary organizations;

  (Comment: "True of virtually 100% of our students. They are very unaware of this type of 'responsibility' - or whatever you call it.")

* lack basic communication skills;

* have ineffective interpersonal relationships.

  (Comment: "A surprising number of people identify a basic need for friendship.")

On the other hand, it is clear that the coaches do not consider their students to be utterly deficient in all the skills of living. A majority of the informants felt that many or most of the beginners

* know how to seek help from community agencies for a wide variety of purposes;

  (Comment: "The students are quite adept at availing themselves of current social welfare-type services.")

* can plan their leisure time according to their wishes;

  (One coach comments, however, that the students are deficient in the constructive use of their leisure time.)

* can plan and enjoy holiday activities with their family.

In the portrait that is emerging, the emphasis appears to be on interpersonal relationships, including relations with persons in authority, and on the lack of self confidence. Repeatedly, a lack of ability to start something new, to initiate an action, to act for oneself, is revealed. The answers to questions about leisure time bring out this point. According to A-47, many are able to plan their leisure time (within their current narrow horizons?), but most cannot start new activities, even though they would like to do so (A-33, A-39).

A few of the results could be misleading without explanatory notes. For instance, some coaches could not report that their students changed jobs frequently because they might not yet have had any job at all. Also, one reason that the record does not show more alcohol and drug problems may be, as one coach reported, that some Life Skills groups do not admit persons with active addiction problems.

The needs implied in some situations are not always the ones that first spring to mind. For example, the skill apparently implied in A-14 is the ability to get police help when something has been stolen. In fact, the problem may not be one of knowledge but of distrust or, perhaps, alienation. "Few believe that the police would be competent and helpful," commented one coach; the teen-agers, many of whom have criminal records, "would avoid contact with the police," wrote another. Similarly, when faced with the job of organizing a party requiring a liquor license, the teen-agers "would not be inclined to follow legal guidelines."

The same teen-agers would not be prevented from making a motion at a meeting by lack of know-how but by "shyness." Moreover, the coach of teen-age groups decided against reporting that most students had problems with alcohol use, but felt obliged to state that few of them could refuse their friends' coaxing to have "one more for the road." The issue seems to be not necessarily addiction but a weakness in resisting peer pressure.

Again and again, the coaches' comments prove how unwise it would be to make superficial inferences from observed behaviours. Yes, stated one coach in answer to A-32, a student may take a doctor's advice and agree to some contraceptive procedure, such as sterilization, but that is not the result of the student's own research or choice. Yes, declared another, if they have chosen to have a family day, they know what to do (A-55), but few may make such a choice. Yes, reported the same coach, they know how to reach chosen goals (A-45); solutions are normally found, once clear and certain goals are established.

Drug use is reported as "severe" among the sole-support mothers, but they are not "hooked" on street drugs, such as hashish or heroin, that are ordinarily associated with the term. Their problem is addiction to tranquillizers, which have been prescribed for them by their doctors.

Besides, the coaches maintain, whatever deficiency exists is not always within the Life Skills student. The problem in getting financial help for an unmarried mother, obtaining assistance from the police, planning and sticking to a budget, and so on, is often

due more to the lack of available resources than to a lack of skills.

One further problem, according to one coach, is that the behaviours that are taught in the Life Skills course itself depend on a "cultural norm" and may not be appropriate in every culture. In one group, for instance, after assertiveness was taught for two days, "the best group member was beaten up by her husband for being 'mouthy'." The real need, then, includes the ability of predicting the consequences of one's actions and of making reasoned judgements about appropriate ways to apply one's newly learned skills in the realities of daily life.

Comparison of Clienteles

On the whole, the three clienteles compared in Table 2 share similar deficiencies.

One set of comparisons may suggest that the sole-support mothers groups differ somewhat from the other two clienteles in a few respects. In six instances, whereas all of the BJRT coaches reported that few of their students could handle the situations, many of the sole-support mothers were said to be capable of doing so. Many of these women:

* can find interesting things to do without money;
* can plan a budget and stick to it;
* can organize a project to help a neighbour;
* can handle an attempted "pick-up";

* can start a hobby, if they would like to;
* can keep their community a good place to live in.

The coach of these women's groups used Part C of the questionnaire to list several additional inadequacies not mentioned by any other coach. These women, she wrote, are unable to recognize their domestic, homemaking abilities as skills, and unable to translate them into marketable skills; they are unaware of stress management, involving fitness, nutrition and support systems; they do not feel competent to deal as parents with children's sexuality, with differences in sexual values, with events related to death and dying (i.e. telling children about death, making arrangements for someone who is terminally ill, etc.).

Another kind of comparison was made by one coach between BJRT students and a cross-section of the general population, in terms of the questionnaire. His opinion is that the "disadvantaged" BJRT students and the "successful" holders of jobs have about the same quantity of life skills. The important differences lie in three key areas: (1) presentational skills, such as verbal, grooming and social protocol skills; (2) skills involving delayed gratification, which relate directly to planning steps towards a goal and sticking to long-range plans; (3) the level of acceptance of societal values.

CONCLUSIONS

What are the differences, then, between the needs for life skills uncovered by this 1981 questionnaire and the needs identified in the developmental stages of the Life Skills course?

Essentially, none. As long as one understands that the original "Himsl description" was always intended to paint a generalized picture and did not imply that every Life Skills student shared each feature of it, it remains valid today. A glance down the columns of the graphic recording of questionnaire results shows that every single item, drawn from the original lessons and program rationale, is considered in 1981 by a majority of informants to represent a problem at least to many of their students, if not to most.

As noted earlier in this paper, observations in the experimental stages showed that students allowed other people to dominate them. In 1981, one coach discussed the same Other-Determined behaviour in this way:

> "Life Skills coaches need more materials on how to cope with the needs of students for assertiveness training. A lot of students are very meek and passive at taking what is handed out to them by others - probably just as high a proportion have had the opposite problem of being unable to express a wish or a problem with others without blowing up, using inappropriate language, etc. Both types of people point to a need for developing improved self confidence, as well as heightened respect for other persons in their lives."

The students of the early 1970s did not realize their need for life skills; the same lack of understanding is found among students today:

> "Students did not realize that their method of dealing with an issue was inappropriate e.g. they would think that they had the life skills to cope with a man who makes a pass at them - by physically attacking him!"

The coach quoted above, who believes that today's Life Skills students lack presentational skills, seems to echo Himsl, quoted on page 5 of this paper: "Typically, many of the Life Skills

students do not know how to present themselves in the most favorable light."

One possible exception to the similarity of needs now and then seems to be an increased knowledge about how to find and use social services. This increase may point to developments in our society as much as it does to skill development in individuals, however. Agencies providing aid and advice have proliferated in the past decade. In addition, specialized information services, such as crisis centres, direct callers to appropriate agencies; in other words, the crisis centre workers do much of the work of identifying problems and pointing to solutions for people who call in. Welfare workers refer clients to numerous self-help groups, such as those formed in many communities by single parents.

It is also possible that the apparent improvement may be partly due to a shift in the locale of investigation. The current questionnaire was answered by coaches working in the urban centres of Ontario, where the population in general may be more sophisticated than that around the small city of Prince Albert, to which students also came from the hinterland of northern Saskatchewan, where the level of education and sophistication tends to be low.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the coaches commented only on the second half of B-8 when they remarked that their students were adept at getting help from community agencies. No one made any reference to the first half, which enquires whether the students use effective ways of seeking help from one another.

The questionnaire results reinforce the earlier understanding that what the typical disadvantaged adult referred to a Life Skills

course needs is not so much information ("knowing-what") as it is skill ("knowing-how"). The fresh understanding that comes from the results is that merely knowing how may also not be enough; individuals must gain enough confidence in themselves to have the power of putting their life skills into practice.

Individuals who come for Life Skills training differ in the particular skills they lack and in the life situations they face. The different clienteles may require slightly different orientations to the areas of living in which they have to use their skills. Nevertheless, a common core of needs for life skills is evident, no matter what the particular group may be. This common core can be expressed in three categories: interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, and knowledge of self worth.

These needs are all interdependent. The process of problem solving reflects assumptions of self worth, for individuals realize that they are not entirely at the mercy of circumstances because they know how to plan and carry out a rational course of action. In turn, the act of solving a problem enhances the sense of personal ability.

Since life is not lived in isolation, problems involve other people and can rarely be solved satisfactorily without interpersonal skills. Part of the problem solving process involves thinking about who is concerned and in what ways one may interact with others.

In daily living, the refusal to be dominated by others and the determination to take charge of one's own behaviour demand a strong sense of one's intrinsic value as a person.

These three categories of needs point to a goal of Balanced Self-Determinism, in which individuals are free to choose how to act because they not only know how to go about solving problems and how to conduct themselves effectively in relation to others, but also have an understanding of their self worth and the worth of others.

"Freedom to choose" will be an empty and even a dangerous goal, however, if individuals do not develop, along with their knowledge of self worth, the faculty of clear thinking, so that they can discern truth from fallacy and evaluate alternatives critically.

In the Life Skills program, learning is defined as behavioural change (Himsl[b], p. 14). The teaching of outward behaviours is an essential feature of Life Skills training: necessary, but not sufficient. A deeper level of conceptual development must be reached if individuals are to make those changed behaviours their own, internalized, to be called upon according to their reasoned judgements of what is appropriate and responsible.

An adequate model for the Life Skills program will show the interrelationships between outward behaviours and inner conceptual development, linking needs, means and goals in a consistent and integrated whole.

Part Two

A MODEL OF THE LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

A COMPOSITE STATEMENT OF PROGRAM RATIONALE

At present, the overall rationale for the Life Skills program is contained in collections of articles written at successive stages of program development by numerous developers who discussed the program from different points of view.

Definition of Life Skills

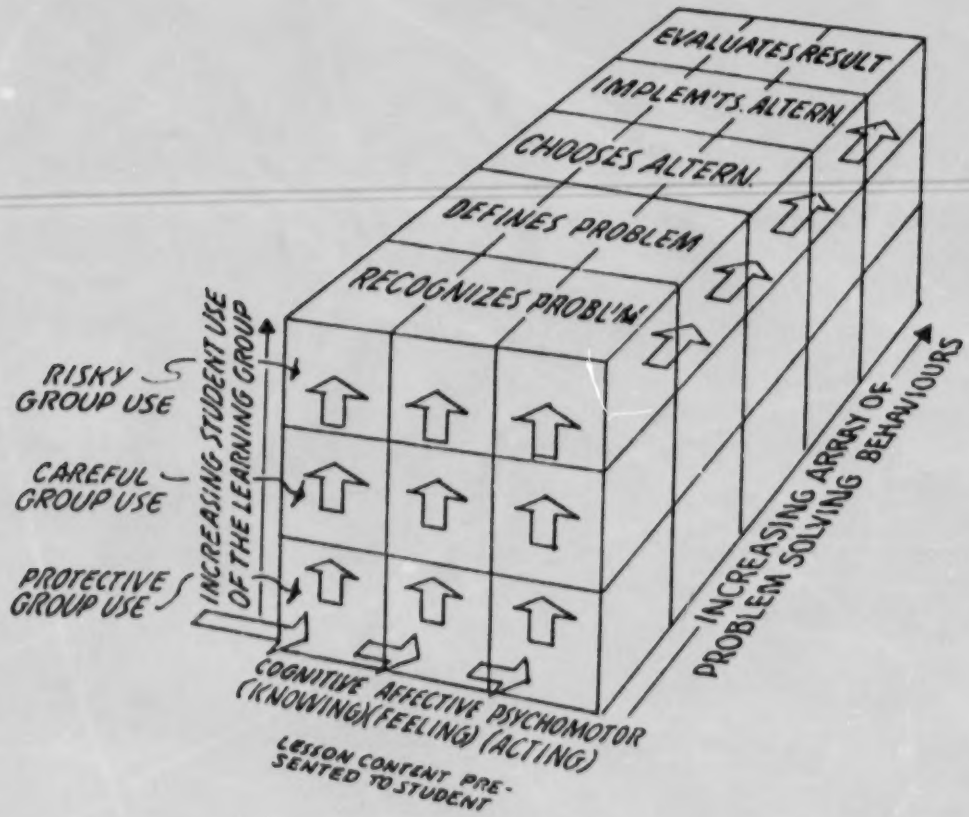
No statement of the Life Skills rationale can be complete without the paragraph that succinctly defines what life skills are and explains the defining terminology (Himsl[b], p.13):

> "Life Skills, precisely defined, means problem solving behaviors appropriately and responsibly used in the management of personal affairs. As problem solving behaviors, life skills liberate in a way, since they include a relatively small class of behaviors usable in many life situations. Appropriate use requires an individual to adapt the behaviors to time and place. Responsible use requires maturity, or accountability. And as behaviors used in the management of personal affairs, the life skills apply to five areas of life responsibility identified as self, family, leisure, community and job."

The Life Skills Process/Content Model

In the Life Skills process, students respond to the course on three dimensions. They respond to the content of the course along the content dimension in the cognitive domain, the affective domain, or the psychomotor domain. They use the group dimension for learning new behaviours and developing skills of self expression,

responding at three distinct levels of increasing group use: safe, careful, or risky. They progress in the problem solving dimension as they acquire and apply a whole array of problem solving behaviours. The interdependence of the three dimensions is illustrated in Figure 1 below.



The Life Skills Process/Content Model
(Himsl[b], p.22)

Figure 1.

Program Objectives

The main objective of the Life Skills program is "to produce graduates who will draw from a repertoire of problem solving behaviors to meet the problems of everyday life"(Himsl[d], p.201). The definition of life skills restricts the scope of this program objective to the management of personal affairs.

A "rather less clearly defined objective" of the course (p.202) is to "develop an individual confident enough to express himself in the discriminating use of these new behaviors."

The criterion for success in meeting these course objectives is a demonstration by the course graduates that they use the new problem solving behaviours in daily life.

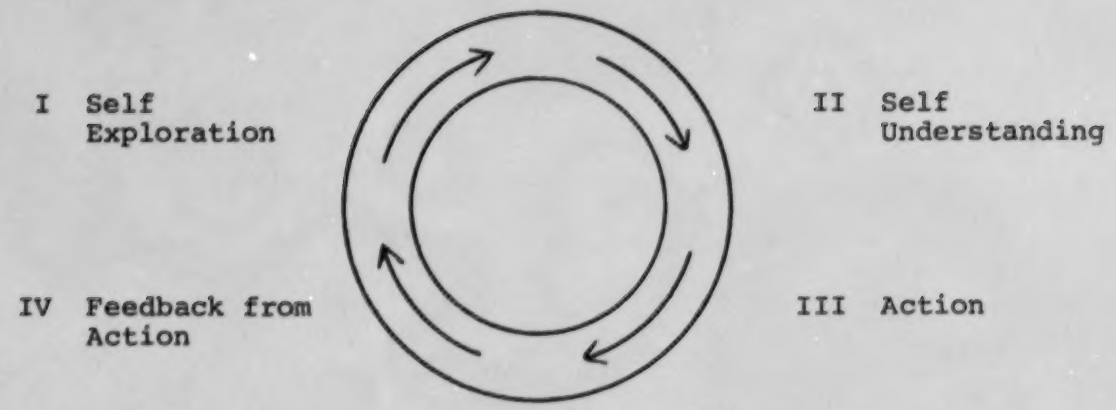
Learning Model

The Life Skills learning model involves two interlocking processes (Himsl[e], p.152):

> "The essential learning model requires the alternation of these two processes: abstraction and application. The process of abstraction yields understanding and modification; the process of application yields changed behavior. Abstraction permits study of the behavior; application proves its learning."

This two-process alternation is elaborated, in The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching (p.113), as a cyclical process by which a Life Skills student learns and progresses towards self direction and self control. This process is diagrammed in Figure 2.

Figure 2.



The Cyclical Process of Increasingly Effective Functioning.
(The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching, p.113)

.....

In this spiralling cycle, self exploration leads to self understanding, which is manifested in action; feedback from the action leads to further exploration, increased understanding and new, more effective actions.

A Unified Statement of Theory

The theories and principles outlined above served the original process of Life Skills development well, making possible the creation of a comprehensive and influential course.

That a program as vital and sensitive to human needs as Life Skills should remain static - fixed in amber, as it were - seems a contradiction. Yet if, in growing, it is to retain its distinctive character, a single unified statement of its theoretical foundations is essential.

MODELS FOR SOCIAL AND LIFE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT: A BRITISH STUDY

In the attempt to formulate a unified statement, the analyses of a British team (Stanton et al) are useful, providing a backdrop against which to assess the real nature of the Life Skills program objectives. This team studied

> "...curricula whose objectives have been primarily derived from a real or imagined analysis of the social demands made on people at work and in the everyday requirements of life in the community" (p.6).

Two sections of the team's report are of particular value to this present study:

(1) a discussion of the distinction between product objectives and process objectives;

(2) the description of seven models for programs in Social and Life Skills (SLS).

Product vs. Process Objectives

PRODUCT approaches, the authors of the study state, view SLS development as a way of achieving a certain desirable end-product; this end-product is an individual who knows certain facts, has mastered certain skills, or perhaps has acquired "appropriate" attitudes or values. In this kind of approach, it should be possible to scale learners according to their competence or incompetence. Two of the examples offered are that the learner should be able to write an acceptable letter of application for a job, and to prepare a simple meal.

PROCESS approaches, on the other hand, are more open-ended, emphasizing continuous development; goals are perceived in terms of desirable processes and potentialities (such as thinking, feeling and acting), which individuals become able to use for their own purposes. "Unlike product competencies, process competencies are never mastered, only improved" (p.13). In PROCESS approaches, the aim is always the development of the learning process; course content is not considered the end of learning but the means to it.

Typical PROCESS objectives are that the learner should be able to seek information and organize it into frameworks, and to see an argument from someone else's point of view.

The PRODUCT-PROCESS distinction is utilized by the British team to delineate seven models of SLS teaching (p.17).

Descriptions of the Seven Models

There are four PRODUCT-oriented models:

(1) The DEFICIENCY Model assumes that the target population has certain basic deficiencies, which must be remedied before individuals can make progress in the kinds of study or work that are normally expected for people of their age.

Two classes of deficiency are distinguished:

(a) in basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy; interpersonal skills; manipulative skills;

(b) in motivation, as the result of a poor or inappropriate self image, the image held of

others, or inability to recognize needs as learning needs.

(2) The COMPETENCY Model emphasizes "mastery," or "competent performance of specific skills in pre-specified tasks for which agreed criteria of competence can be established" (p.21). Using the telephone, and surviving with simple ("bed-sit") cooking, are two examples of the competence aimed at in this type of program.

(3) The INFORMATION-BASED Model assumes that knowing a body of pre-selected facts is the goal of SLS development. These facts may involve either knowing how, as in how to obtain an unemployment insurance benefit, or knowing that, as in knowing that vitamins are essential for good health.

(4) The SOCIALIZATION Model aims at developing specified attitudes, values, or willingness to adjust to particular requirements in the world of work or to the expectations of society in general.

Three of the seven models are PROCESS-oriented.

(5) The EXPERIENTIAL Model is based on open-ended learner activities that incorporate a range of skill and knowledge demands; in these activities the opportunities for developing particular capacities are not clearly predetermined. Organizing and carrying out a community service project, or the performance of work activities in a simulated office, are examples.

(6) The REFLECTIVE Model aims to develop a student's "ability to 'pattern' experience or data in alternative ways, perceive

relationships, make and check generalisations and develop conceptual frameworks" (p.29).

In an academic application, students are introduced to systematic ways of tackling problems, engaging in enquiry, and so on. In a personal application, the reflective process concentrates on the direct experience and activities of the participants. Usually conducted in a learning group, REFLECTIVE/Personal programs seek to help students develop their own perceptions of patterns and relationships and to learn certain methods of approach to problems.

(7) The COUNSELLING Model, emphasizing the importance of the affective domain, arranges for individual and/or group reflection on experiences in order to increase individual understanding and control of behaviour, understanding of others' feelings and emotions, and ability to distinguish between emotional and cognitive elements, as in decision-making.

This model refers to counselling as a general teaching activity rather than as specialist therapy.

The Meaning of "Model"

In the next section, similarities between the Life Skills program and this array of models will be studied, but a few preliminary words of caution are necessary.

First, the names of the models are characterizations, every one of which could apply to a range of SLS programs having their own theoretical models. The names are descriptions of model types, not the models themselves.

As a result, the significance given to the word model by the British authors is not exactly the same as the meaning the word has in the Life Skills literature. To the British team, a model is "an idealised approach" (p.1); to the NewStart developers who constructed the Life Skills Process/Content Model, the meaning of the word more closely resembles Bunge's understanding of model as an interpretation of abstract theory, conceptualizing the relations of abstract notions (Bunge, Ch.8). The distinctive NewStart process/content model, which evolved during the experimental stages of development, can be seen as "a bridge between 'discrete' observations about the data and the 'simple and connected picture' furnished by a theory" (Stewart, p.78).

The Life Skills Program and the Seven Models

The British team stress the point that the seven models highlight the basic features of different approaches. Any given program probably includes elements from more than one model.

One method of studying the theory of Life Skills is to follow their suggestion that any SLS scheme can be profiled, using the seven models as parameters. Such a profile is constructed by assessing (1) what is learned in the scheme, (2) how it is learned, (3) why it is learned, and (4) how much attention is given to it.

If this method were adopted, the task would involve a consideration of the entire Life Skills program presented in a training course. Trying to describe the theoretical foundations of Life

Skills by examining only the phenomena of the printed lessons would be like judging the mass, strength and shape of an iceberg by the visible formation on the surface of the sea.

Analysis of the Life Skills lessons themselves can divulge little more than the first requirement: what is learned. Part of the methodology is implicit in the lessons, but much more is revealed in the coach training manual, The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching. The reasons for learning must be sought in the collections of articles constituting the Life Skills literature. The final question, concerning the amount of attention devoted to its study, cannot be answered at all, except in relation to particular places where the course is offered.

A profile, therefore, would be incomplete. In its place is a survey of the principal similarities and dissimilarities between the Life Skills program and each of the seven models. Features from all seven models can be discovered in the Life Skills program, at least to a minor degree.

(1) From the DEFICIENCY Model: Life Skills developers identified an entire complex of inadequacies in its target population, in terms of interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, knowledge of resources, and self image; indeed, the course was conceived and designed with those deficiencies in mind.

However, the course philosophy and methodology do not focus, in a negative way, on deficiency. Rather, the focus is on the positive aspect of skill building. The whole thrust of Life Skills is to develop abilities.

This important point is explicitly discussed by one of the program team (Warren[a], p.140):

> "The method of training stresses behavior and skill, not problems or motives. This may sound contradictory since the Life Skills course is a program in applied problem solving. We believe, however, that a frontal attack on problems tends to fix them more solidly since they are aspects of life that people can not confront. Dealing with problems directly reactivates mechanisms of denial and distortion. Thus problems are approached indirectly as situations for behavioral skill development. We do not dig for problems since the program is not group therapy or confession...Instead, emphasis on how the person can behave differently can provide him with a wider array of behaviors for a given type of situation or problem."

The positive approach in Life Skills philosophy is also evident in the recognition that students enter a training course with abilities as well as inadequacies (Himsl[d], p.202):

> "The course builds upon those effective behaviors already possessed by the student by adding new behaviors to his repertoire; in the course he recognizes strengths he already has, and learns of strengths he may never before have recognized."

A training methodology that teaches students to appreciate their hitherto unknown capacities is a far cry from a model that concentrates on deficiencies which must be remedied before students can "make progress on 'normal' provision" (Stanton et al, p.19).

(2) From the COMPETENCY Model: Life Skills emphasizes the performance of specified behavioural skills.

However, competence in those behaviours is not seen as an end in itself. The students learn attending behaviours, for example, not for the sake of maintaining eye contact with a conversational partner, but as one step towards being able to

communicate effectively with other persons.

(3) From the INFORMATION-BASED Model: During a training course Life Skills students garner a considerable body of facts about community resources, tenants' rights, parliamentary procedures, and so on.

However, the information content of the course is always part of a different type of objective. For example, the task of collecting information about tenants' rights is intimately linked with the objective of developing telephone skills, the skill of interviewing someone in authority, problem solving skills of planning, and the ability of seeing an argument from someone else's point of view. There is no prescribed list of facts to be learned; instead, the particular direction an information search takes often depends on the interests and needs of the learning group.

(4) From the SOCIALIZATION Model: The Life Skills lessons contain activities that could be used as vehicles for instilling values and promoting attitudes of conformity to societal norms. For example, the students learn various skills for dealing with persons in authority; they explore the expectations of employers; they consider the topic of personal appearance and dress, including the kind of appearance that is considered appropriate to different occupations.

However, the lessons avoid any suggestion of pressure to conform. That is not their purpose. The dominant objectives in lessons with this type of content involve the practice of problem

solving skills, such as brainstorming and predicting results; communication skills, such as the giving and receiving of feedback; and - again - the ability to comprehend another person's point of view.

(5) From the EXPERIENTIAL Model: This approach seems to have a very limited place in Life Skills, but there are a few proposed activities that share some EXPERIENTIAL characteristics. Some examples are: planning and conducting a clean-up program, a project to visit hospital patients, a community survey, and the simulation of an election.

However, in each case, the project that is suggested as one possibility among many is only a vehicle for the achievement of very definite objectives, such as developing and carrying out plans; using parliamentary procedures in a formal meeting; evaluating results; recognizing the skills they have put into practice; learning the power of concerted action in attaining some desirable goal, and so on.

The descriptive phrase "...the opportunities for developing particular capacities not being clearly predetermined" (Stanton et al, p.27) shows this model to be fundamentally alien to the spirit of the Life Skills course, which is built upon stated behavioural objectives.

(6) From the REFLECTIVE Model: Life Skills methodology involves a learning group, in which the students learn problem solving and interpersonal skills as they participate in the behavioural experiences of the course and are trained to reflect

on their own reactions and the reactions of others, thereby gaining insight.

However, this model seems to be entirely bereft of the structured training plan and pervasive behavioural emphasis of the Life Skills course.

(7) From the COUNSELLING Model: The Life Skills program stresses the importance of the affective domain. Lesson plans provide for individual and group reflection on experiences in order to increase the students' self awareness of their own projected image.

However, this model appears to lack any kind of structured training in problem solving and to accord no place to the learning of predetermined behavioural skills.

The Life Skills Approach: PRODUCT or PROCESS?

The distinctive theory and practice of the Life Skills program have not been captured in any one of the seven models. Nevertheless, visualizing the program against the background of the seven models has served to highlight two important, and superficially contradictory, characteristics of the Life Skills program.

(1) The Life Skills course consists of definite and clearly stated PRODUCT objectives. The behavioural skills which are listed by Smith and Williams (p.100) are competencies that can be mastered, and the "level of learning" to which they are taught in existing lessons has been assessed.

(2) The overall program objective of developing in students the power to use the new behaviours for their own purposes, in solving their personal problems of everyday life, fits the definition of a PROCESS approach.

As PRODUCT objectives, the behavioural skills are the means to an end. Each forms part of a larger, functional objective; that is, it is learned in order to be used in the accomplishment of a more complex purpose. Thus, the skill "to ask himself 6-W questions," which is clearly a PRODUCT objective, is learned not for itself but for use in solving problems. Similarly, the skill "to describe personal feelings as a result of a stressful situation" is a PRODUCT objective, a competency that can be mastered, but it is learned for use in solving problems, developing control over emotions and changing behaviours in group members.

It is interesting to position the Life Skills objectives on a PRODUCT-PROCESS continuum, according to their degree of complexity.

- When life skills are analyzed to the most specific behaviours, as in the Smith-Williams list, they appear as competencies to be mastered, that is, as PRODUCT objectives.
- When life skills are summarized under the category headings of problem solving skills, human relations skills, process skills, and coping skills (Smith and Williams, 89), their character as PRODUCT objectives becomes blurred. Problem solving skills, for instance, are described as those "which enable the student to set, implement and evaluate short and long term goals and resolve personal problems." That definition, which lodges control over the skills in the student, has moved closer

to a PROCESS approach, which seeks to develop "certain processes and potentialities...which the learner is able to use for his or her own purposes."

- And when life skills are seen as a synthesis, aimed at developing individuals confident enough to express themselves in the discriminating use of a repertoire of problem solving skills in meeting the problems of everyday life - to cite the course objectives quoted on page 44 of this paper - PRODUCT has been enveloped by PROCESS.

The advice on evaluation given to coaches (The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching, p.200) confirms that PROCESS is the paramount concern:

> "While you have an interest in judging final product skills, ...your greater interest is in measuring the process the student uses to acquire new skills."

The specific behavioural skills, which give the Life Skills program its concrete substance and rigorous training structure, are in reality sub-skills. "A new act is mastered, only to be supplanted by a 'higher-order action' that usually encompasses it as a subroutine" (Bruner[a], p.4). The whole is greater than the sum of all its parts. It is as an ongoing process of moving continually to life skills of an increasingly higher order that the Life Skills program, in its totality, can best be described.

THE VIEWPOINT OF COGNITIVE SCIENCE

The developing discipline of cognitive science, with its fresh interpretation of the meaning of cognitive, provides the theoretical tools to construct an adequate model of the Life

Skills program, showing the interrelationships between observable behaviours and inner conceptual development.

General Principles

Boden (p.63) calls cognitive science an integrated approach to the mind. Because knowledge enters intimately into all of human life, the classic distinction between cognitive, conative and affective aspects of the mind is more a matter of emphasis than it is a reflection of autonomous mental realities. "Not only thought and belief, but also action, intention, purpose, value and emotion are generated by way of cognitive representations in the mind."

This "new intellectual synthesis" (p.66) studies the content, structure, function and development of mental representations. It regards knowledge, action and emotion as closely interacting functions of each individual's unique view of the world, or world-model.

From the biological point of view, Goodwin (p.88) describes the cognitive system as one which operates on the basis of knowledge of itself and of its environment. He stresses the creative nature of cognitive systems; they "obey rules which limit their behaviour and give them invariant properties, but within these limitations they have the freedom of virtually unlimited variety" (p.89).

Certain basic principles of cognitive science are particularly appropriate to Life Skills theory and practice.

- An individual's model of the world determines the acquisition and organization of knowledge.

One of the two truisms used by Life Skills as the source of its methodology is that "learning starts at the learner's current level of functioning and his understanding of present reality" (Himsl[b], p.14).

The Life Skills coach recognizes that "each individual in his group carries a unique life experience to the learning setting which affects his response to it" (Himsl[d], p.203).

- The individual's world model is organized pluralistically in domain-specific knowledge, as a set of "loosely aggregated micro-worlds" (Apostel, p.111).

The domain on which Life Skills concentrates is the management of personal affairs, with particular relation to the life areas of Job, Family, Leisure and Community. The problems that Life Skills students tackle and learn to solve are all problems that concern SELF in relation to those life areas. "The course design provides the student with an opportunity and the skills to study his problems, or to put it another way, to study himself as a problem" (Himsl[a], p.59).

This principle of pluralistic cognitive organization explains how it comes about that even some adults who are well equipped cognitively to deal with data from the external world may lack the skill to deal effectively with internal data. A genius in solving algebra problems may be at an utter loss in solving problems concerning himself and his relationships with other persons.

- Knowledge is represented as "procedures" or "skills" rather than as "assertions." In cognitive science, "knowing how" has superseded "knowing that" in importance. To know something means to be able to do something.

In Life Skills, learning is defined as changed behaviour. The learning model alternates abstraction and application: knowing how-to-do and doing.

- Knowing, acting and feeling are interacting functions of each individual's world-view.

The Life Skills Process/Content Model claims that each student responds to the content of a Life Skills course on the cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains, in knowing, acting and feeling.

Cognitive Development

The cognitive viewpoint also accounts for the effectiveness of Life Skills training, which is rooted in observable behaviour.

According to Piagetian theory, individuals develop cognitively through ordered stages. In Piaget's conception, thought is internalized action, and the process of this internalization can be charted from infancy to maturity.

The word operations is Piaget's term used to signify a step beyond mere action in the internalization process. Operations are "a means of getting data about the real world into the mind and there transforming them so that they can be organized and used selectively in the solution of problems" (Bruner[2], p.35).

Piaget described a stage of "concrete operations," in which children are not yet readily able to deal with possibilities not directly before them or not yet already experienced. This type of operation is a means for structuring only immediately present reality. Children at this stage are able to anticipate things that are not present, but they do not review systematically the full range of alternative possibilities that could exist at any given time. They can grasp intuitively and concretely a great many basic concepts, but they are not capable of making systematic deductions from abstract theory.

The stage of "formal operations" ordinarily emerges during adolescence and is characteristic of mature adults.

To formal reasoners, reality is only one of many possibilities. They can appreciate hypotheses which are not proven concrete realities and are able to consider as possibilities all potential variables and combinations of variables that might affect an outcome. They can make deductions from the possible to the empirically real in order to verify hypotheses. Thus, confronted with a problem, the pattern of formal reasoning is first to envision possible causes and combinations of causes and afterwards to act in a systematic <u>if...then</u> manner of deducing what should happen.

Recent research, according to Berzonsky (p.279), suggests that all adolescents, or even adults, do not develop complete formal reasoning. "Furthermore, those adolescents who do reason formally do not do so in an all-pervasive manner; they may reason formally in some situations but not in others.

A comparison of the formal reasoning pattern (sketched above) with the Life Skills Problem Solving Process (Martin, p.182) is instructive. That process trains students to:

- recognize the problem situation;
- define the problem, by collecting many facts; hypothesizing with the question "In what ways might...?"; evaluating these hypotheses with the question "Why?"; and choosing the best hypothesis;
- choose a solution, by finding possible solutions; finding criteria; choosing a solution; and predicting results;
- implement a solution, by planning how to carry out the solution and doing so;
- evaluate the result, by comparing the results of the action with what was predicted.

The inclusion of this process as a fundamental component of the Life Skills course implies that a basic need for elementary training in problem solving was identified by the program developers, and that is indeed the case. The inadequacies in problem solving behaviours that they observed in students during the experimental stages of Life Skills development have already been reviewed in Part One. In the domain of personal affairs, the typical Life Skills students seem not to have reached the stage of formal reasoning.

Other suggestive clues to the students' level of cognitive functioning in the interpersonal realm may be found in several responses by coaches to the Part One questionnaire about the needs for life skills. A student who is satisfied with physical attack as the single solution to an attempted "pick-up" (Part One, p.38) seems to be operating at a limited level that still involves a

concrete action. In another report, a coach elaborated on his judgement that most Life Skills students are unable to describe reasonable courses of action (Questionnaire, B:1c) by adding "...usually only one, inadequate course of action is seen."

The implication is strong that, at least in the domain of personal affairs, the individuals who are referred for a Life Skills course have not yet progressed from the concrete to the formal stage of cognitive development.

In the light of these comparisons, it can be hypothesized that training in the problem solving and interpersonal behaviours of the Life Skills course functions to raise the cognitive level of participants from the concrete stage towards the formal stage, in the domain of Self in relation to the external world. Life Skills students learn, as Berzonsky expresses it (p.279), to conduct "thought experiments" prior to acting and consequently to proceed in a systematic rather than a trial-and-error manner when solving personal problems.

A corollary to this interpretation of what Life Skills training does is of vital importance in planning lesson activities and presentations. Training can help an individual to pass progressively from concrete thinking to a more conceptually adequate mode of thought, but this process can only be accomplished by beginning "where the student is," that is, in the concrete mode. It is futile, declares Bruner[b] (p.38), to present formal explanations based on a logic that is alien to the students' manner of thinking and sterile in its implications for them.

Much credit for the effectiveness of the Life Skills course, then, can be attributed to its emphasis on the concrete: observable behaviours; active involvement by the participants; physical demonstrations of abstract ideas, such as trust; concentration on the "here and now." The process of developing basic concepts is not approached from abstract theory but through concrete experience.

Whether or not Life Skills training actually raises the cognitive functioning of given students, from a concrete level on entrance all the way to the level of formal reasoning (in terms of personal affairs), depends on factors exterior to the program: factors in the students themselves and factors related to course presentation. In theory, however, the Life Skills program provides such training. It sets in motion a process of cognitive development. As the British team remarked (Stanton et al, p.13), process approaches are open-ended; process competencies are never mastered but only improved.

Conceptual Growth

The elaboration of the Life Skills learning model, diagrammed on page 46, includes as one of its four elements "self understanding."

"Understanding," according to the cognitivist Moravcsik (p.101), involves having concepts. In Vygotsky's words (p. 53):

> "...a concept is not an isolated, ossified, changeless formation, but an active part of the intellectual process, constantly engaged in serving communication, understanding, and problem-solving."

A concept is formed as the cognitive mechanisms identify external and internal data, differentiate between them, put them in order, classify them, establish relationships between them, and integrate them into existing cognitive structures.

However, the concepts that are developed do not always reflect reality accurately. The data base on which they are formed may be weak; the information may be wrongly interpreted; the world-view into which the new information is incorporated may be coloured by ungrounded assumptions. At any point in the chain of full concept formation, some distortion of reality may occur.

The importance of this point for Life Skills is that flawed concepts can play a destructive role in an individual's relations with other people and in that person's acquisition of new knowledge. If the concepts being developed out of the experiences of Life Skills training are to play a constructive part in restructuring a student's world-view, those experiences have to be evaluated critically. The new understanding that emerges from the alternation of active behaviour and inner reflection has to be tested for its validity.

The skills of evaluating critically and testing the validity of claims are as necessary to mature living as attending behaviours and elementary problem solving skills. From the cognitive viewpoint, critical thinking skills are one variety of life skills.

THE LIFE SKILLS INTEGRATION MODEL

In constructing a comprehensive model of the Life Skills program, there is no need to surrender any of the theoretical underpinnings expressed in the statements of rationale collected in the first section of this paper. The definitions, process/content model, learning model and main objectives are still basically valid.

The need, rather, is to unify the scattered principles and relate them in an explanatory theory. The insights provided by the viewpoint of cognitive science make this unification possible.

As a consequence of choosing this theoretical stance, however, an awkward problem arises. The word cognitive already plays an important role in the Life Skills Process Content Model, but it is used there in its traditional and restricted sense: "knowing" that pertains especially to abstract thinking. In the newer understanding of cognitive, which was presented in the previous section, cognitive does not exclude action and feeling but embraces them.

Therefore, in the unified theory of Life Skills, two senses of the term cognitive have to be distinguished:

(1) the thinking activity that is teamed with affective and psychomotor activity to constitute the content dimension of student response to the training course.

(2) the totality of stored knowledge, or meanings, that is structured in an individual's world view and that functions in the acquisition of new knowledge.

Rather than alter irretrievably the three-term content dimension that has had much heuristic value for Life Skills developers and practitioners, the theoretical framework that follows continues to employ the word cognitive along with psychomotor and affective, but in modified form: cognitive (thinking). This usage has the added value of stressing the important role in Life Skills training of critical thinking behaviours.

Integration

The title "Life Skills Integration Model" has been chosen because it encapsulates the notion that the learning of life skills is a process of integrating sub-skills, manifested outwardly as observable behaviours, into cognitive structure. These sub-skills are successively subsumed into higher-order life skills, which in turn are manifested as observable problem solving and interpersonal behaviours of an increasingly complex nature.

In this way, the cognitive powers are raised, in the domain of Self in relation to the external world, from a concrete level to the level of formal reasoning.

In the process, the concept of Self is developed, leading to the formation of a coherent Self-Others image, which generates the Balanced Self-Determined behaviour that is the goal of the course.

This process of integration of life skills into cognitive organization has been expressed in The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching (p.89) as the sequence: unconscious incompetence →

conscious incompetence → conscious competence → unconscious competence, "where the skills learned so painfully seem to be a natural part of your life."

The main program objectives have been stated to be the development of individuals who have a repertoire of problem solving behaviours from which they draw and who are confident enough to express themselves in the discriminating use of those behaviours. These objectives imply sufficient integration of the skills within individuals to enable them to manage their personal affairs by applying the skills appropriately. Again, it is in The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching (p.92) that this interpretation finds expression:

> "The Life Skills course attempts to aid students to become aware of these [creative problem solving] processes and to practise them. Then, when they are integrated at the level of unconscious competence, these new creative behaviours become part of the student's 'automatic' responses to problem situations."

Under this interpretation, the criterion for success in meeting the Life Skills program objectives is the continuation of the Life Skills integration process in an individual after training has ceased.

The formulation of the overall objective in terms of Balanced Self-Determined individuals, solving the problems of their everyday lives creatively, answers critics who suspect ulterior, socially coercive motives in a program of social skills training (Lee, p.85). The term "Others" in "Self-Others image" includes not only individuals but also people representing "society." Persons who have a coherent Self-Others image, and are therefore able to

practise Balanced Self-Determined behaviour, will not be submissive creatures, allowing themselves to be manipulated by authority or pressured into conformity, Quite the contrary. Balanced Self-Determined persons choose their behaviour freely and exercise self control because they have integrated into their understanding the concept of personal value, the meaning of which is that both they themselves and other persons are equally worthy of justice and respect.

Elements in the Life Skills Integration Model

A Life Skills Course

A Life Skills course is a combination of program and training. These two components form the total course to which the students respond in the Life Skills Process/Content Model.

The Life Skills PROGRAM consists of:

(1) the training course plan (Life Skills Coaching Manual);

(2) coach training (planned in The Dynamics of Life Skills Coaching);

(3) Life Skills theory (contained in the published materials).

Life Skills TRAINING is composed of four factors (Himsl[b], p. 15):

(1) the Life Skills lessons;

(2) a trained coach;

(3) the students;

(4) the resources of the community.

The students and coach together constitute the LEARNING GROUP in which the training process occurs. This group provides opportunities for real interpersonal encounters, the giving and receiving of feedback, problem solving activities, and other cooperative experiences. The expertise of a trained coach is a sine qua non of an effective learning group.

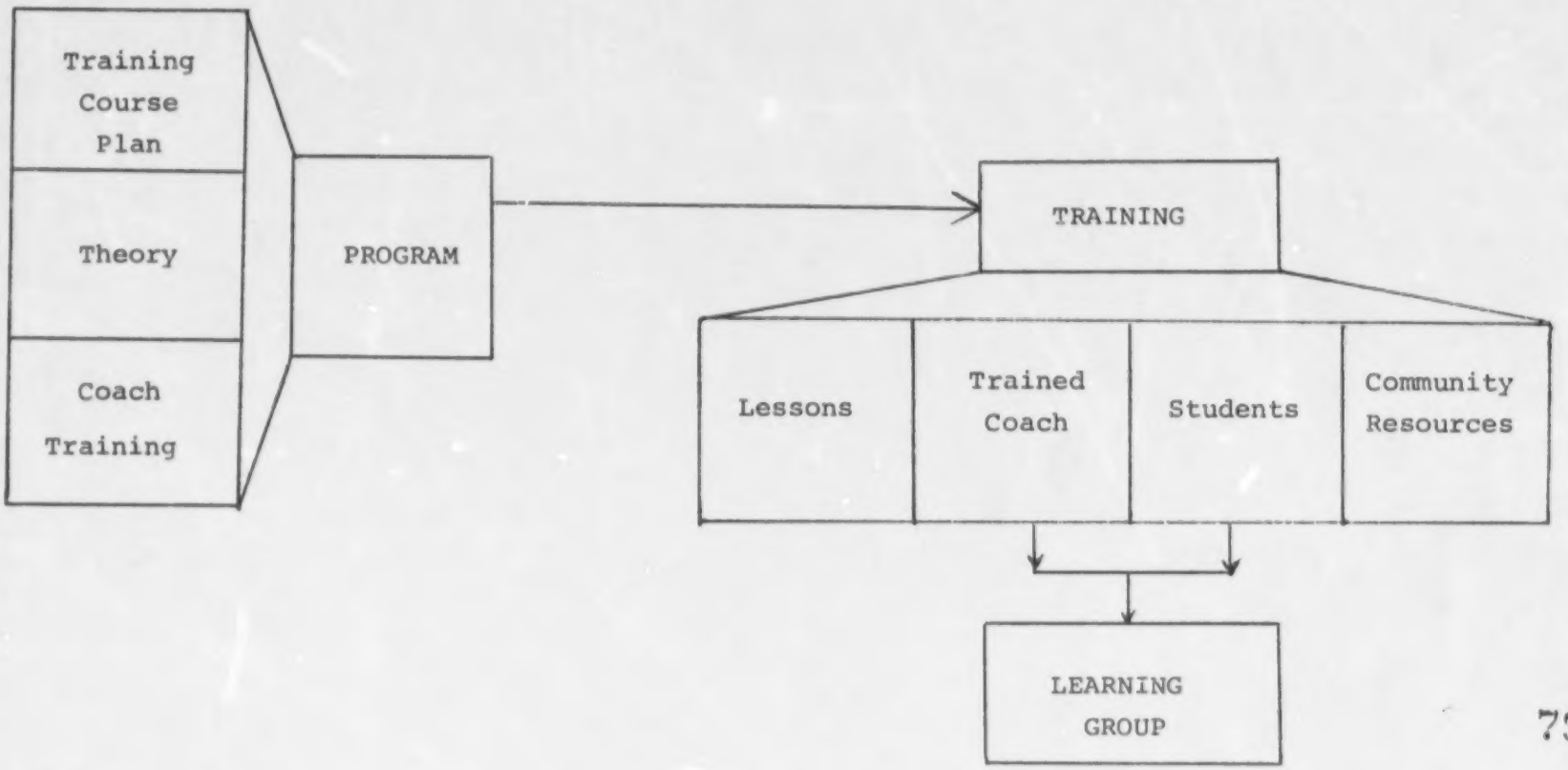
The components of a Life Skills course are shown graphically in Figure 3 on the next page.

The Training Process

The TRAINING PROCESS involves a LEARNER in a LEARNING GROUP.

An important facet of Life Skills theory is that learners bring with them to the training course a body of strengths as well as inadequacies. Training begins by engaging the learner's abilities in selected experiences.

Figure 3. COMPONENTS OF A LIFE SKILLS COURSE



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Nevertheless, it should be recognized that persons usually become Life Skills learners because they have distinct needs. These needs vary from individual to individual, but they typically include problem solving skills in the realm of human relations, as well as a deficient sense of self worth.

The training process is activated by some kind of CONCRETE EXPERIENCE. It may be a modelled behaviour, or the learners' own actions, or some kind of behaviour experienced through audio-visual aids. Its value lies in its accessibility to the senses, so that its superficial content can be readily grasped and an examination of its significance can commence.

An essential element in the training process is FEEDBACK resulting from behavioural experience. As an invaluable resource that contributes to profitable feedback, videotape recording is the vehicle par excellence for enabling learners to visualize themselves and their behaviour in a concrete rather than vague and abstract way, thereby gaining the "objective distance" that is necessary for observing and improving their behaviour.

The Life Skills Process/Content Model graphically illustrates the three dimensions of LEARNER RESPONSE TO THE COURSE.

Whereas the process/content model represents all kinds of student response to all the experiences of the course, there must also be specific PRACTICE of the NEW BEHAVIOUR. This may occur in the classroom or outside of the training setting; wherever the new behaviour is practised during a Life Skills course, it is part of the training process.

As the new behaviour is practised, learners participate in exercises that train them to reflect on its effects, formalizing their awareness. They also learn to make a CRITICAL EVALUATION, judging whether or not the behaviours they choose to put into practice are appropriate and responsible, and ensuring that they are interpreting the information on which they base their judgements in accordance with reality.

Critical evaluation cannot be regarded as a one-time event in a cycle of the training process. Critical behaviours are required at each point in the development of a new concept and the consequent restructuring of the individual's world-view.

The total response to a behaviour by a learner in the learning group, when practised and evaluated, constitutes the data about the real world that are taken into an individual mind, to be organized and used selectively in the solution of problems. This COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING AND CONCEPTUAL GROWTH integrates the behaviour into the learner's view of the world.

Thus, since the learner knows how to use the behaviour, it becomes a BEHAVIOURAL SKILL.

As the new skill is exercised in the performance of another CONCRETE EXPERIENCE, both are subjected to FEEDBACK, and the training process continues in another cycle.

The Objective of the Life Skills Program

The overall objective of the Life Skills program is to develop a BALANCED SELF-DETERMINED PERSON SOLVING PROBLEMS CREATIVELY IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

This quality of behaviour is made possible by the integration of life skills into cognitive structure and the growth of a Self concept, which leads to the formation of a coherent SELF-OTHERS IMAGE.

This Life Skills goal may not be realized during the relatively short duration of a training course. However, the spiralling process that moves towards that ideal is initiated during training. The degree to which individual learners integrate that process cognitively into their world-view determines how far they will proceed towards the ideal.

The Life Skills Integration Model is diagrammed in Figure 4 on the next page.

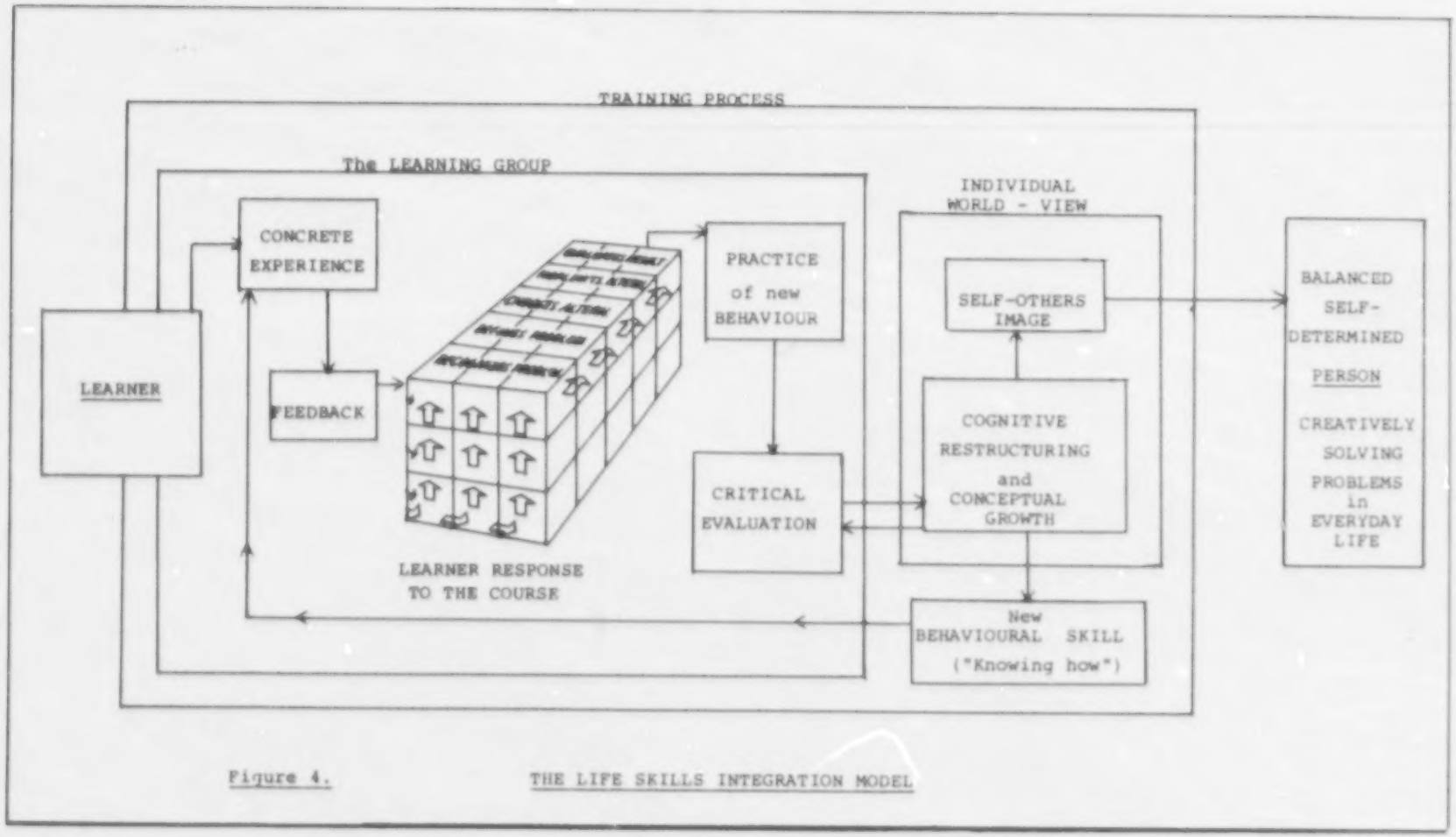


Figure 4. THE LIFE SKILLS INTEGRATION MODEL

Part Three: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

Life Skills Training Materials

THE TARGET POPULATION

The Life Skills Integration Model asserts that learners who enter the training process bring with them their strengths and weaknesses. Life Skills training begins for them "where they are," at their current level of functioning and understanding of present reality.

To assess Life Skills training materials in the light of this model, then, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the target population for whom the materials are mainly developed.

The Meaning of "Disadvantage"

> "Life Skills training provides disadvantaged adults with the knowledge and skills to demonstrate competence in human relations and in areas of life responsibilities." (Methods of Human Resource Development, p.4)

Who were the disadvantaged for whom the Life Skills program was designed? Although the Saskatchewan NewStart developers recognized that economic interpretations of disadvantage were totally inadequate, still the association was with poverty. A phrase coined by Oscar Lewis, "culture of poverty," was cited in an explanation of the complexity of problems that prompted the creation of Life Skills (Himsl[c], p.6):

> "Whether or not one chooses to accept Lewis' concept of a culture of poverty, his suggestion of complications in the problems confronting the disadvantaged sound a warning for those looking for simple and quick remedies."

Now that the Life Skills course has been in use for more than a decade, a more comprehensive description of those requiring Life Skills training has been called for (Smith, p.15):

> "Problem solving is a critical function in daily living, and all too frequently individuals do not have an adequate skill level in problem resolution. As Life Skills continues to develop it will come to be used more and more in a variety of contexts including management, consumer groups, etc.; in fact, in any situations in which individuals have problems they desire to solve. Thus it may be more meaningful to state that many individuals can benefit from training if there is a need, and a willingness, on the part of those individuals to either develop new problem solving skills or to improve on existing skills so that they will be able to deal more effectively with life situations."

Smith's vision of the target population is very broadly inclusive, for few people are so skilled that they cannot improve their existing skills in dealing with life situations.

From this point of view, "disadvantage" does not inhere in poverty or unemployment but in the lack of skills. Individuals may have or lack a job; they may be on welfare or have money in the bank. No matter where they may locate themselves on a socioeconomic scale, they are disadvantaged in the management of personal affairs to the extent that they do not have sufficient knowledge and confidence to resolve life problems creatively.

This new attitude towards disadvantage is in keeping with the current preference for thinking of individuals at some point on a continuum rather than stereotyping and labelling an undifferentiated mass. The disabled, for instance, are no longer regarded as a distinct grcup of persons easily identifiable by

observable physical or mental signs. Instead, the current thinking is that every person has abilities; that every person, at least at some stage of life, will experience disability; that some persons have more obvious disabilities than others. In the same way, some people have many life skills, while others have few.

The theoretical model elucidated in Part Two is appropriate to this new understanding of disadvantage. According to the model, any individuals who exhibit some degree of need for life skills can begin wherever they are on the life skills continuum. Life Skills training sets in motion the integration process that moves them along the path towards Balanced Self-Determined behaviour.

The Part One study of needs for life skills confirmed the findings of original investigations, but from a different starting point. That is, the original studies began from the notion of a group in society, to whom the epithet "disadvantaged" had been given, and gathered evidence of their characteristic problems and inadequacies. The Part One questionnaire began with the students actually present in Life Skills programs, not from an identifiable group at the low end of a socioeconomic or educational scale. Those students were referred for training because they had been judged to lack life skills, not because they were necessarily poor or undereducated or unemployed.

As a consequence of the new understanding, program developers can no longer assume that only one, monolithic target population exists. Training materials prepared for everyone - for

management and consumer groups, university and basic literacy students - are not likely to exert the maximum impact on anyone. It is essential to specify a more constrained target population within the totality of people who could be said to need life skills, and to make the training materials as appropriate as possible to the characteristics of that delimited group. If the fundamental development is then done well, the resulting materials can serve as a model that can be adapted for use by other clienteles.

CEC Clients

As it was observed in Part One, Basic Job Readiness Training programs are probably the most representative users of the Life Skills course. Canada Employment Centre clients are referred to BJRT programs, not because they are disadvantaged in the old sense of being poor but rather in the new sense of lacking skills. Although the CEC clientele is by no means homogeneous, the generalizations that can be made about it have relevance for the preparation of Life Skills training materials in such a way that they will be appropriate to the needs of that selected target population.

MOTIVATION

First, even though CEC clients are referred to a BJRT class, they must have gone to a CEC voluntarily, and the reason they went was that they needed a job. This inference reveals an

underlying motivation, which should be exploited in the Life Skills training materials, since "any adult needing basic education and Life Skills will probably need some bolstering of his motivation - motivation to enrol, to learn, to persevere, and to use what he learns" (Warren[a], p.120).

The theme of employability, as a context for Life Skills training materials, restricts the choice of subject matter only by providing an overall orientation; it by no means excludes any of the other areas of life responsibility specified in the Life Skills definition. In fact, most people who lose jobs because of poor job performance "do so not due to a lack of work skills, but because of poor working behaviours" (Rosove, p. 8). The skills of solving personal problems that arise away from the workplace contribute to a person's ability to find and keep a job. This interdependence of personal problem solving skills and employment skills is clearly expressed in the Personal Needs Sourcebook of PLACE (p.5):

> "Even if you are qualified for your work, you have good job search skills and you are a good worker, these may not be enough to keep you working. Any one of a number of personal problems can keep you from putting your best effort into your job or job search."

Furthermore, work plays a major part in life satisfaction. Rosove, citing studies that demonstrate the central importance of work to a sense of well-being (p.1), states, "We take a large part of our identification from it and thus it forms a significant part of our self-concept." An orientation towards employment-

a term which could also be interpreted more broadly than "paid job" - does not detract, therefore, from the value of Life Skills materials for other, non-CEC clienteles.

LIFE SKILL NEEDS

The second generalization that can be made about CEC clients is that, while their needs for life skills are severe generally, their most outstanding needs seem to centre around an absence of self confidence. A study of Table 2 in Part One reveals that students in BJRT programs tend to be unable to initiate activity, to express themselves to other people, to deal confidently with others, especially with those in authority, or to set their own goals and carry out their own plans.

This characteristic points to the necessity of ensuring that Life Skills training materials deal adequately and explicitly with behaviours that contribute to the growth of self confidence. It is a BJRT coach who pleads for materials on how to cope with the needs of students for assertiveness training. Since appropriate and responsible assertiveness might be described as Balanced Self-Determined behaviour, it comes as no surprise that the same coach later calls for "BSD-model-type lessons."

Again, an emphasis in the training materials on the development of Balanced Self-Determined behaviour for the sake of CEC clients is equally valuable for other clienteles. Many people who need Life Skills training for any reason have rarely seen themselves successful in anything and really do not believe in their self worth.

ACADEMIC LEVEL

A third generalization that can be made about CEC clients concerns academic level, a factor that did not have to be questioned in the original Saskatchewan NewStart development. Since all the students in the experimental classes had dropped out of school (Himsl[b], p.16), developers knew from the start that lesson presentations could not be complicated or abstract.

However, in the newer understanding of skill disadvantage, in which any willing person might benefit from Life Skills training, it is conceivable that Life Skills groups may include some who are well educated in addition to those who are not. It might even be that Life Skills students today have a generally higher level of school background than the students at the research centre in Saskatchewan did. If that were so, a question of appropriate lesson presentation could arise: would the Life Skills lessons be rejected by well-educated students as oversimple and lacking in intellectual challenge?

Once again, the experienced coaches of the Ontario Committee on Life Skills Coach and Trainer Training have provided pertinent information. They were asked to generalize about the Life Skills students they had coached over the years, by using the terms ALL, MOST, MANY, FEW and NONE to indicate numbers of students, according to the highest grade they had attended.

It is recognized that the collected data do not constitute statistical evidence of anything. Only six coaches were able

to respond; they had to rely on memory; the selected descriptive terms are only generalizations. On the other hand, Life Skills coaches ordinarily know their students intimately and acquire a clear idea of their background circumstances.

In spite of their non-statistical status, the data are useful because they show an interesting trend. Table 3 on page 86 records the results.

A simple quantification of these verbal generalizations permits their combination by grade levels, thus sharpening the picture of the academic background in these Life Skills groups. The terms were assigned ratings as follows (fractional numbers being assigned to those terms that individual coaches introduced themselves, in their effort to be precise):

NONE:	0.0	MANY:	2.0
VERY FEW:	0.5	MOST:	3.0
FEW:	1.0	ALL:	4.0
SOME:	1.5		

("Significant numbers" was assumed to be "more than NONE and less than FEW," and was therefore assigned the rating of 0.5.)

Table 4 on page 87 presents the same information as does Table 3 in numerical form. The averages have also been calculated. On the right-hand side of the table, the average ratings for the generalizations from the three coaches who reported mainly about BJRT groups are listed.

These average ratings are plotted on graphs in Figure 5 (page 88) and Figure 6 (page 89).

Table 3. HIGHEST SCHOOL GRADE ATTENDED

Generalizations by 6 Coaches concerning Life Skills Students

Type of Clientele / Highest Grade Attended	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3	Coach 4	Coach 5	Coach 6
	BJRT	BJRT	BJRT & Women's Groups	Women's Groups & Others	Women's Groups	Failing Post-Sec. Students & Others
University (or other post-secondary) class	FEW	NONE	NONE	FEW	VERY FEW	MANY
Grade 12/13	FEW	FEW	NONE	FEW	FEW	MANY
Vocational class (after grade 10/11)	FEW	FEW	FEW	FEW	FEW	SOME
Grade 10	MOST	SOME	FEW	MANY	MANY	MANY
Grade 8	MANY	MOST	MOST	MOST	FEW	MANY
Grade 6	FEW	MOST	MANY	MOST	VERY FEW	FEW
Below grade 6	NONE	"significant numbers"	MANY	FEW	NONE	NONE

Table 4. HIGHEST SCHOOL GRADE ATTENDED

Quantified Generalizations by 6 Coaches concerning Life Skills Students

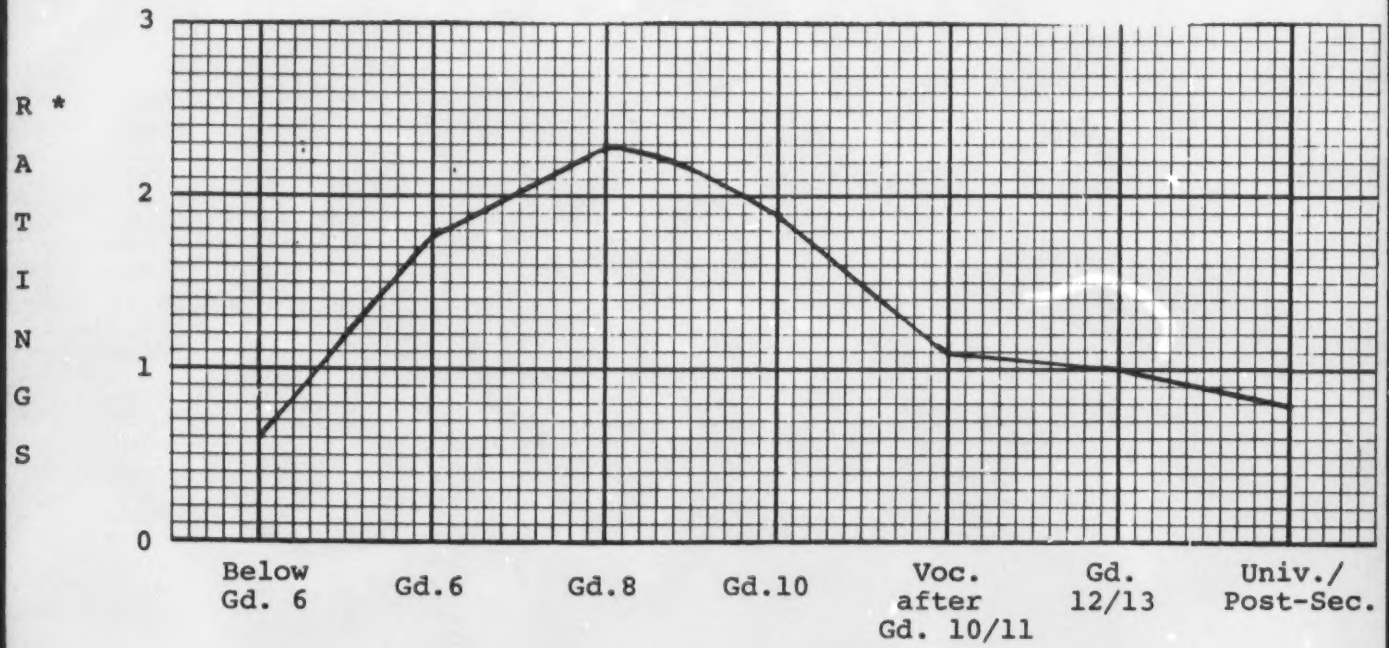
Key to Ratings: NONE: 0 VERY FEW: 0.5 FEW: 1 SOME: 1.5 MANY: 2 MOST: 3 ALL: 4

Highest Grade Attended \ Type of Clientele	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3	Coach 4	Coach 5	Coach 6	6 Coaches Mixed Clients		Coaches 1-3 Mainly BJRT	
	BJRT	BJRT	BJRT & Women's Groups	Women's Groups & Others	Women's Groups	Failing Post-Sec. Students & Others	TOTAL	AVER-AGE	TOTAL	AVER-AGE
University (& other Post-secondary)	1	0	0	1	0.5	2	4.5	0.8	1.0	0.3
Grade 12/13	1	1	0	1	1	2	6.0	1.0	2.0	0.7
Vocational class (after gd. 10/11)	1	1	1	1	1	1.5	6.5	1.1	3.0	1.0
Grade 10	3	1.5	1	2	2	2	11.5	1.9	5.5	1.8
Grade 8	2	3	3	3	1	2	14.0	2.3	8.0	2.7
Grade 6	1	3	2	3	0.5	1	10.5	1.8	6.0	2.0
Below grade 6	0	0.5	2	1	0	0	3.5	0.6	2.5	0.8

Figure 5. HIGHEST SCHOOL GRADE ATTENDED

Averages of Quantified Generalizations by 6 Coaches concerning Life Skills Students

Mixed Clienteles

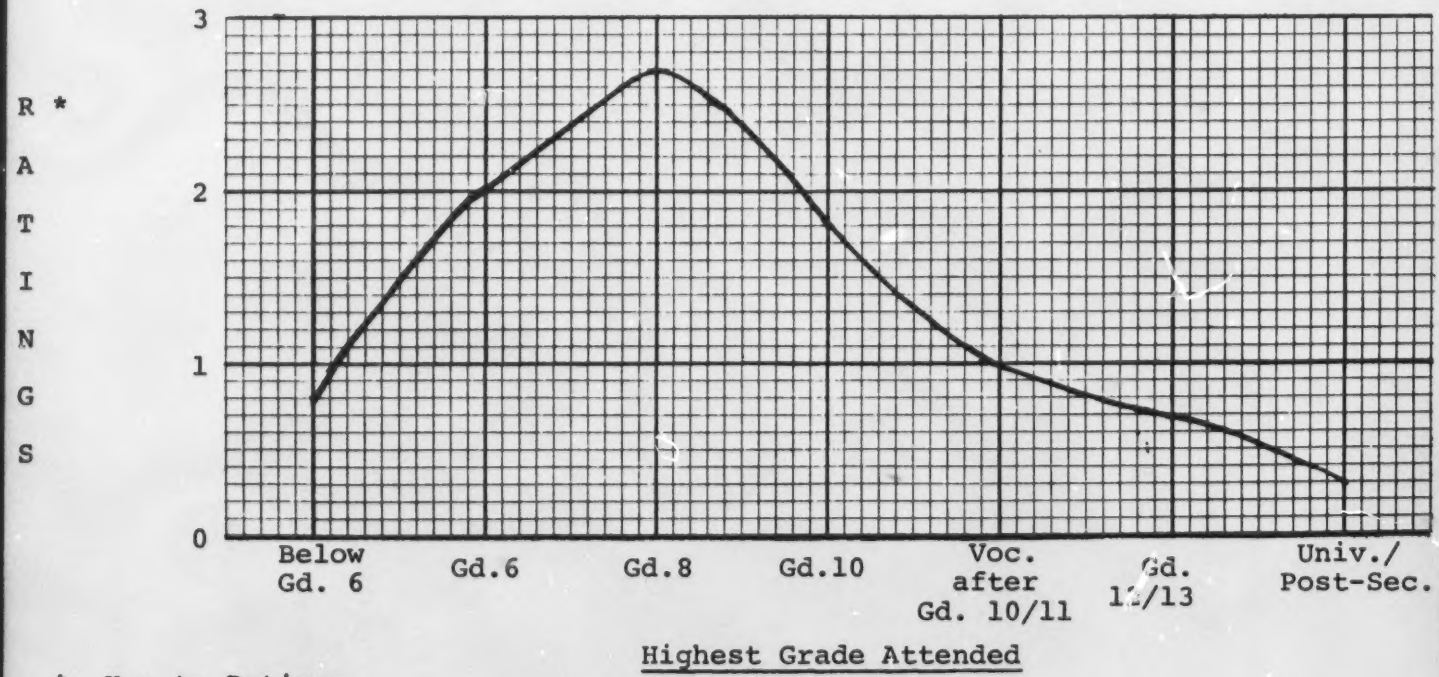


* Key to Ratings

NONE:	0.0	MANY:	2.0
VERY FEW:	0.5	MOST:	3.0
FEW:	1.0	ALL:	4.0
SOME:	1.5		

Figure 6. HIGHEST SCHOOL GRADE ATTENDED
Averages of Quantified Generalizations by 3 Coaches
concerning Life Skills Students

BJRT Programs



* Key to Ratings

NONE:	0.0	MANY:	2.0
VERY FEW:	0.5	MOST:	3.0
FEW:	1.0	ALL:	4.0
SOME:	1.5		

The tables and graphs point out two important trends. First, a large majority - more than 75% - of the Life Skills students in the experience of all six coaches did not attend school after grade 10. The heaviest concentration is between grade 6 and grade 10. Second, the steeper curve of the graph in Figure 6 shows that an even higher percentage of BJRT students are thought to have gone no further than grade 10 in school.

These estimates show that a large majority of Life Skills students in general, and BJRT students in particular, are at the Adult Basic Education level. An idea of the academic capabilities of the target population can be gained from a study of the objectives and practice exercises of the LINC course, a program that was developed at Saskatchewan NewStart for adult academic training in the grade 5 to grade 10 range.

Training materials that are written at this level of academic background will be just as usable by those Life Skills students who are more advanced. It is easy for a coach to make adjustments upwards, by introducing a richer vocabulary and illustrations drawn from textbook knowledge and broader interests, but it is difficult for a coach, in the pressures of training, to make adjustments downwards, thinking up "on the spot" simpler and more concrete ways of expressing abstract propositional knowledge.

CRITIQUE OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINING MATERIALS

In the action-research tradition of Saskatchewan NewStart, an evaluation of training materials cannot be accomplished without putting them to the test of use under experimental conditions and analyzing the results. The discussion of Life Skills lessons in this paper is a theoretical critique and not an empirical evaluation. Its aim is to assess the extent to which these training materials meet criteria that are established by the theoretical model explained in Part Two, and by the needs for life skills described in Part One.

Two sets of training materials are under consideration. The first is the set of lessons, developed at Saskatchewan NewStart and published in the Life Skills Coaching Manual, that have been used as the basis for Life Skills courses for approximately a decade. The second is a set of lessons newly written at the Occupational and Career Analysis and Development Branch (OCAD) of Employment and Immigration Canada. For the sake of brevity, these two sets of materials will be referred to in this paper as the SNS lessons and the OCAD lessons, respectively.

There are 61 SNS lessons, all of which follow the five-phase plan of Stimulus, Evocation, Objective Enquiry/Skill Practice, Skill Application, Evaluation. These lessons reached their present form only after experimental use with successive groups of students over a period of several years. In contrast, the OCAD lessons, of which there are 30, have not yet gone through any experimental trial-and-rewrite cycle.

Furthermore, the SNS lessons constitute a course, planned with a beginning, an end, and a gradual development between. Whether or not the OCAD lessons constitute a course in a similar sense is a question that will be tackled later in this paper.

Except in the matter of skill objectives selected for training, this critique does not compare the two sets of lessons. Instead, both sets are examined separately, according to objectively identified criteria.

Criteria

The criteria established by the theoretical model and the needs of the target population fall into three categories: course design, training methodology and lesson content.

COURSE DESIGN

The Life Skills Integration Model portrays the learning of life skills as a process in which sub-skills are successively subsumed into higher-order skills, which are manifested as problem solving and interpersonal behaviours of an increasingly complex nature. It states that the spiralling process moving towards the overall objective of Balanced Self-Determined behaviour is initiated during training in the acquisition of behaviours.

The implication of this theoretical picture is that there is an orderly plan, showing how specific simple behaviours lead

to more and more complex skills until the overall objective is reached. This orderly plan is the foundation for curriculum development.

All the behaviours that are deemed necessary to achieve the skills that students should have in their repertoire at the end of training are organized hierarchically in a training course design. No behaviours are included that are not necessary to those terminal objectives (unless optional skills are so identified). Adequacy is balanced by economy. The arrangement of the behaviours represents a logical sequence of skill development. The design expresses the means of achieving the overall objective.

Training materials for a Life Skills course should fulfill the demands of the course design:

(1) They should provide training in all the behaviours that the course design shows to be necessary, and they should not include training in other behaviours, unless they are shown to be optional.

(2) They should provide for sufficient training in each behaviour to permit the inference that it is within a student's repertoire.

(3) They should be so arranged that a complex behaviour is not expected of students before they have the opportunity to learn the simpler behaviours that are involved in it.

From a practical point of view, a rigid sequencing of behavioural objectives is not essential in a Life Skills training course as it is in an individualized program. In fact, strict

obedience to a planned skill sequence may be impossible where there is a continuous intake policy. Also, from the theoretical viewpoint, one can only learn what one is cognitively ready to learn. "The learner is the one who does the grading, taking in from the input that which he or she is ready to take in" (Crymes, p.4).

However, the training materials bear the responsibility of presenting behavioural skill objectives in a logical order, from simple to complex, as a model for the guidance of the coaches who deliver the training.

(4) The training materials should express the overall objective clearly enough so that all who use them are shown the goal and purpose of Life Skills training.

TRAINING METHODOLOGY

(5) In the Life Skills Integration Model the training process involves a learner in a learning group. One dimension of the Life Skills Process/Content Model, which represents the total learner response to the Life Skills course, is the Group Dimension, along which students ideally progress from protective use of the group, through careful use, to risky group use.

Life Skills training materials should therefore assume the setting of a helping, learning group and should encourage the increasingly risky use of the learning group by the students.

(6) The training process in the theoretical model involves a cyclical movement from action to feedback to self exploration

to self understanding and action, at a higher level. Since the model shows students responding to the course content in the cognitive (thinking), affective and psychomotor domains, Life Skills training materials should include plans in each lesson for the students to think, feel and act in response to the new behaviours that are introduced. They should train students in giving and receiving feedback, so that they can help one another acquire competence in the behaviours. There should be plans in each lesson to guide the students in reflecting on their experiences in the course, thereby gaining a deeper understanding of themselves.

(7) The model shows that critical evaluation is necessary at each point in the development of a new concept, as the individual's world-view is restructured. Just as untrained action and untrained feedback would be futile or counterproductive, so untrained evaluation is inadequate for the task.

Life Skills materials should include training in skilled thinking so that the ability of making critical evaluations of experience becomes part of the spiralling growth of life skills. In that way, students will learn to make reasoned judgements about appropriate and responsible behaviours in the realities of their everyday lives.

LESSON CONTENT

(8) Life Skills are defined as problem solving behaviours used in the management of personal affairs. They apply to five

areas of life responsibility: Self, Family, Leisure, Community, Job.

The subject matter of the lessons is the medium through which students are brought to a realization of their need for life skills; through it, they begin to understand the consequences of different behaviours and have opportunities to work out solutions to problems.

To ensure that skill training is economically directed towards the management of personal affairs, the subject matter of Life Skills training materials should be within the personal domain, concentrating on the five identified areas of life responsibility.

(9) The behaviours that are charted in the course design are the immediate objectives of Life Skills lessons.

> "In the Life Skills course, the coach uses the techniques of behavior training to produce behavioral change in the students. This requires a precisely stated behavioral objective recognized and accepted by the students..." (Methods for Human Resource Development, p.5).

The lesson objectives in Life Skills training materials should state the behaviours from the course design that the students will learn, and to what extent they will be learned, by means of the planned activities of the lesson.

(10) Since the theoretical model states that training in life skills begins at the learner's current level of functioning and understanding of present reality, Life Skills training materials should be made as appropriate as possible to the training needs of the target population.

Appropriateness for the general characteristics of CEC clients implies:

- uncomplicated presentations in language at the Adult Basic Education level;
- subject matter likely to be within the experience of students at the Adult Basic Education level;
- concrete experiences rather than abstract propositional teaching;
- lesson content that is maximally motivating because it is intrinsically enjoyable; it shows relevance to the students' immediately felt needs and respect for their adulthood; it involves the students actively in the training situation; it provides frequent opportunities for success in learning.

The Missing Link between Theory and Practice

No sensible critique of the SNS course, and no intelligent recommendations concerning the use of the OCAD lessons, can be made without a knowledge of the full range and detail of skills that the Life Skills lessons are supposed to give training in. In other words, it is necessary to know the course design in order to be able to judge the adequacy of training materials in fulfilling their function.

It must be assumed that a plan of necessary behaviours leading towards the management of personal affairs in the five

areas of life responsibility was drawn up originally to guide the experimental development of the Life Skills course. However, one looks now in vain through the published materials for a taxonomy of skills leading to specific terminal behaviours. In this regard, it is significant that the first task of the Smith-Williams lesson plan analysis was not to locate the teaching and practice of skills already charted in a course design, but "to determine, classify and catalogue the course skills" (p.80).

Nor can the course design be inferred from the statements of lesson objectives in their aggregate. They do not put into visible form the planned build-up from simple behaviours to the complex skills that are stated as terminal objectives. Sometimes the lesson objectives refer only to an unanalyzed group of behaviours; they do not predict a logical sequence for skill development; they are not arranged to show sub-skills being subsumed by higher-order skills.

The chart prepared for an essay describing the Life Skills course (Himsl[a], p.66) "does not identify specific skills, except in one or two instances. Each skill classification includes more than one skill."

The closest approach to a full identification of skills can be found in the study by Smith and Williams (p.89), but they were listing what they discovered in published lessons, not setting out what must be present to achieve the course objectives. And behaviours in a spiralling learning process do not belong in a list, as if each were equal in complexity to every other. They belong in a hierarchy. The physical skills of maintaining eye

contact and attentive body posture are not at the same level, for instance, as the attending behaviours of "responsible reflection," but subordinate to them.

The missing link between theory and practice is a visible plan that represents decisions made during the process of course design, answering questions such as:

- What behaviours are needed to bridge the gap between the elementary, physical attending behaviours and the complex ability of responsibly reflecting the feelings and comprehension of the listener?

- What behaviours constitute a full range of presentation skills?

- What behaviours will bring students to the level of appropriate and responsible assertiveness?

- How far do students need to go in acquiring the skills of management to be able to manage their personal affairs?

- To what level of logical reasoning do Life Skills students need to proceed in order to apply critical thinking to the solution of their personal problems?

These are just a few illustrations of the way a course design guides the development of training materials and provides a fixed point of reference against which to assess whether they are adequate or inadequate for their intended purpose.

The importance of a course design becomes particularly evident when new developments are contemplated after new needs have been identified. When the design exists, a new track of

skills can be fitted into the overall scheme. Some of the added skill objectives will probably subsume simpler skills already in the course or contribute in some way to the development of previously identified terminal goals. Without a course design into which new objectives can be fitted, the combination of new and old is likely to be confused and haphazard.

With a meticulously planned course design, it is possible to make judgements, supported by evidence, that training materials fulfilling the course design could or could not develop in students a given abstract quality, such as assertiveness or employability or control over impulsivity. Such abstract terms embody whole syndromes of behavioural skills. Having control over impulsivity, for instance, means being able to delay gratification by deferring judgement, comparing courses of action, making plans, predicting outcomes, carrying out a plan to reach a goal, and so on. When the abstract quality is analyzed into its constituent behaviours in this way, comparison between that analyzed set and the behavioural objectives of the course can be made. The resulting judgement about the degree of progress that could be made towards that quality by using the training materials would not be based on wishful thinking or vague intentions.

Access to a course design would bring other benefits as well:

- Basic data would be available from which developers could ensure that each skill receives the requisite training attention to bring it within a student's repertoire.

- The course plan would be made readily understandable to coaches in their training period. Afterwards, by referring

to the course design, they would be able to sequence lessons intelligently, according to the particular needs of their groups.

- The evaluation of student progress in skill development would be facilitated.

- The course design would be a model for adaptations of the Life Skills course to the needs of specialized clienteles.

The SNS Life Skills Coaching Manual

Criteria Related to COURSE DESIGN

(1) Adequacy of Skill Objectives

As a course in applied problem solving in the personal domain, the SNS lessons provide training in life skills that have been categorized under four headings: problem solving skills, human relations skills, process skills and coping skills (Smith and Williams, p.89). This training has been empirically demonstrated for more than ten years to change student behaviour and approach to life problems. The question remains, however, whether the skill objectives are inclusive enough to achieve the objective expressed in the theoretical model.

Smith and Williams (p.138) themselves pointed out nine skills that are not present in the SNS lessons but are needed to complete and complement the problem solving and human relations skills of the course. These are particular behaviours related to the gathering of data/information, the development and evaluation

of plans, individual intake communication, and in-group and one-to one communication. In other words, they recognized gaps in skill clusters that were already in the course.

In the light of the renewed study of needs and theory, however, the SNS course in shown to lack whole clusters of skills that are needed if the course objective is to be reached.

For example, the model underlines the importance of training students to make critical evaluations, so that they can judge whether or not their behaviours are appropriate and responsible, and be sure that they are interpreting the information on which they base these judgements in accordance with reality.

The problem solving behaviours in which Life Skills students are trained provide a firm foundation on which to develop the skills of critical thinking. From the beginning, the students are trained to ask fact-finding questions as the first step towards defining a problem. They are trained in an elementary way to test their assumptions by asking why questions and predicting the results of alternative solutions. The lessons on setting criteria and assessing solutions according to those criteria constitute further training in this cluster of skills.

What appears to be lacking is more specific training in the skills of assessing not only the experiences that take place in the training setting but also the total flood of data to which every person is exposed. In the cognitive viewpoint, the formation of concepts occurs as individuals identify, differentiate, order, classify, relate and integrate external and internal data.

Students should become able to assess these data throughout the conceptualization process. It will not be necessary for them to become adept in logic or in scientific methodology, but they do need tools for making a critical examination of the ideas and beliefs that affect the management of their personal affairs.

The first two groups of problem solving skills in the Smith-Williams outline are headed Gather Data/Information and Analyze Data/Information. The critical thinking skills that are identified for the Life Skills course would fit in neatly as a third group: Evaluate Data/Information Critically.

The remaining four groups of problem solving skills in the outline are headed Set Goals, Develop Plans, Implement Plans and Evaluate Plans. This set of skills seems to lead towards the ability of managing personal affairs, yet they do not go quite far enough to train the students in all the skills that the management of personal life implies. The concept of management needs to be developed.

The need expressed by a coach for materials to train Life Skills students in assertiveness has already been mentioned, and the similarity between appropriate and responsible assertiveness and Balanced Self-Determined behaviour has been noted. BSD behaviour is not treated at all in the published SNS lessons, although it is probable that some training in it is actually given because the coaches learn about it in their own training. Also, the problem solving and human relations behaviours taught in the course all contribute to a repertoire of skills and a knowledge of self that are necessary for BSD behaviour. A study would

probably show that those skill objectives, though necessary, are not sufficient, and that practice in higher-order interpersonal skills, as well as deliberate exposure to the concept of BSD behaviour, should be added to the training.

Smith and Williams pointed out that most of the "coping areas" (such as money management, alcoholism, personal appearance) are presented only at the level of exposure. Coping skills, according to their description, combine all other kinds of skills in applications that transfer life skills from the classroom to real life. In the SNS course, just three coping skills are developed more thoroughly: completing job application forms, preparing job application letters, and preparing resumes. A practical problem is that the development of strong coping skills requires time. However, if the course is designed to help people cope in life situations, at least one "coping area" should be treated thoroughly.

A coach comment from the Part One questionnaire and a generalization about the characteristics of CEC clients come together to suggest an appropriate coping skill area. The coach identified three important areas of difference between the "disadvantaged" BJRT students and the "successful" holders of jobs; one of those was the BJRT students' lack of presentation skills, elaborated as verbal, grooming and social protocol skills. In the SNS course the term "presentation skills" apparently refers only to verbal skills and chiefly to oral presentations.

If, as seems probable, CEC clients are in BJRT programs because of feeling a need for employment, the development of a

coping skills project centred around the coping area of JOB would seem to be appropriate. In this regard, very useful material is already available in the manuals of PLACE: Guided Steps to Employment Readiness.

Any coping skill area that is developed can serve as a model for adaptation to the interests of other clienteles.

(2) Adequacy of Skill Development

Smith and Williams have already reported that the SNS lessons do not give sufficient practice in a majority of the skills to which the students are exposed to permit the inference that they are within a student's repertoire. In their list of 71 problem solving and human relations skills, only 21 were considered to be practised to that level, which presumably is what is required for the objective of managing one's affairs.

However, the problem may not be quite so serious as it seems on the surface. If the skills were organized hierarchically, as the theoretical model implies, instead of in a simple listing, it would become evident that some of the elementary skills would be subsumed in a higher-order skill, during the exercise of which the elementary skills would receive a great deal more practice. For example, the analysis shows that the lessons develop the problem solving skill of obtaining ideas by asking In what ways might... only to the point at which some students, within the group, perform the skill. That questioning strategy is introduced in the first third of the course and later becomes an integral part of the problem solving system

learned by the students. They probably ask that question over and over again as they use the system to tackle problems. Thus, a behaviour may become perfected, and perhaps even habitual, as it is used repeatedly in the performance of a more complex behaviour.

(3) Logical Sequence

There are two ways of looking at the question of sequence: the sequence of skills, according to the dependence of a given skill on prerequisite behaviours, and the sequence of training activities designed to foster the development of a helping group and provide the climate within which individuals can grow in confidence and develop their life skills.

Because the SNS developers elected the second approach, probably as a consequence of the experimental use of the lessons, Smith and Williams experienced considerable difficulty in tracing skill development within the course (p.125). Their chart of lesson sequence shows a way of ordering the lessons,so that no skill is taught before another that is prerequisite to it, that is entirely different from the order in the published course.

However, a training course is made for students, not for programmers. The explanation given for the SNS sequence of lessons (Himsl[a], p.66) makes it understandable on empirical grounds. After a set of three lessons, in which the learners begin to interact with one another in a non-stressful stage of their self study, lessons 4 to 18 train the students in listening to one another,

discovering things about themselves from feedback in group experiences, and expressing their feelings and knowledge to one another. In fact, they are being trained to help one another achieve the new behavioural skills.

In lessons 19 to 39, the students continue to use these interpersonal skills, adding an array of problem solving skills and practising their accumulating skills within the learning group. They are also led to practise them outside the group, but they make commitments to their colleagues to do so, and the group concerns itself with each member's success or failure in fulfilling that commitment.

From lesson 40 to lesson 59, the students are confronted with opportunities to transfer skills from the training situation to life situations. An essential training technique for this purpose is role playing by group members, who help one another rehearse. A lesson at this stage "requires a task oriented group" which, for example, helps a member describe his problem situation, examine the assumptions, and define the problem.

In the final two lessons of the course, the students work with the help of their fellow students to determine their individual progress in skill development, to set goals, and to make plans for continued improvement of life skills. The very last activity in the Evaluation section of the final lesson is a discussion of ways group members can continue to help one another after they leave the training course.

It would seem desirable to combine the two aspects of sequence. An orderly progression through the skills of the course should still be attainable within the plans for building a group spirit.

(4) Expression of the Overall Objective

In the explanation of the theoretical model in Part Two, it was stated that the overall program objective - Balanced Self-Determined persons creatively solving problems in everyday life - might well not be achieved during the limited period of training by individual students.

However, one of the principles of training by objectives is that the students themselves should know what they are expected to learn. The lesson plans follow the practice of telling students the lesson objective, both orally and in written form, so that in the Evaluation they can judge the extent to which the objective was achieved. Mager (p.4) lists as an additional advantage of clearly defined objectives the fact that "the student is provided the means to evaluate his own progress at any place along the route of instruction and is able to organize his efforts into relevant activities."

Although the goal of Balanced Self-Determined behaviour may be considered a long-term result of the life skills integration process, initiated and given momentum during a course, there should be enough training activities to enable the students at least to recognize Balanced Self-Determined behaviour, distinguishing it from Other-Determined and Selfish-Determined

behaviour. The overall objective should be made explicit at some stage of training so that by the end of the course the students could evaluate their own progress towards that goal and carry away with them the ideal they can continue to work towards. This is not done in the SNS lessons of the Life Skills Coaching Manual.

Criteria Related to TRAINING METHODOLOGY

(5) Development of a Learning Group

Much of the vitality and affective impact of the SNS lessons is due to the cultivation of a helping learning group within which life skills are demonstrated and practised.

The helping function of the learning group (which is an essential element of the Life Skills Integration Model) distinguishes the learning of life skills from the learning of, say, arithmetic in an individualized program or even any other subject, such as history, in a classroom. A Life Skills learning group is not just a collection of students among whom individual students are taught and learn. It becomes a living organism: it is painfully born, makes shaky efforts to acquire the skilled behaviour for which it was designed, gathers strength and starts to realize its powers, finally imparting in its last will and testament to its members a faint glimmering of the real potential of a cooperative, caring community.

Individual skill development and the development of the skilled group are inextricably intertwined. No vital, concerned group ever develops from a collection of individuals unless it grapples with hard, demanding tasks, and these are provided in abundance, through the SNS lesson activities, in the struggles by and with individuals to face and overcome personal barriers to the creative management of their personal affairs.

Group development is not left to chance in the SNS course. From the beginning, specific exercises are introduced to cultivate a spirit of trust and caring. In that atmosphere, the students are encouraged to respond along the Group Dimension at steadily rising levels of risk.

(6) Cyclical Learning Process

The students are involved in participatory activities in every SNS lesson, in a good balance of thinking, feeling and doing. The lessons are planned so that the students receive feedback on their practice of the new behaviours from one another, from the coach and from the videotape equipment, which is in regular use. They themselves learn to give feedback as well as to receive it.

There is always a planned opportunity for reflecting on the training activity and its feedback in order to become aware of the consequences of different behaviours. A frequent question that challenges the group to reflect on their own interpersonal behaviours is "What is going on here? Think!"

A particularly valuable example is the way in which the students are trained to accept the reality and normality of emotions, even listing all sorts of words to describe feelings. By learning to recognize and name an emotion, they gain the objective distance from it that is necessary if they are to be able to view it as an abstraction. As they conceptualize it, the students can begin to exercise control over it. Because they acquire a new, mental mode of experiencing emotion, they are no longer slaves to the physical manifestation of that emotion and can start to channel it productively.

(7) Development of Critical Evaluation Powers

Evaluation is built into every SNS lesson as the fifth and final lesson phase. During this period the coach and students together reflect on the activities of the lesson, questioning what they did to reach the lesson objective, commenting on the usefulness of the training exercises, and suggesting ways of applying new behaviours in their own lives.

The inadequacy of specific training in the critical aspect of evaluation has already been noted. The point here is that their new skills in critical thinking should be applied as soon as possible during Life Skills training. When the students make any kind of evaluation, they should be reminded to use whatever level of critical thinking skills they have learned up to that point, examining, for instance, whether or not their observations offend against the rules of assessing observations. Some of the

critical thinking skills, if sufficiently analyzed into simple steps, can be introduced little by little and applied regularly to evaluations of training experiences.

Criteria Related to LESSON CONTENT

(8) The Personal Domain

The subject matter of the SNS lessons lies well within the domain of personal affairs, in the five areas of life responsibility: Self, Family, Leisure, Community, Job. As noted in Part One, however, these categories, which are printed at the head of each lesson, do not always help to identify the skills that are the objectives of the lesson. It is as if these lesson categories were a relic of an earlier version of the Life Skills course, when the behaviours must have been organized along five tracks, instead of being viewed as problem solving behaviours that are transferable to a variety of life situations.

(9) Clarity of Behavioural Objectives

The lesson objectives are not formulated in a clear enough manner to ensure that all concerned can have no doubt about the behaviours that will be learned by means of the lesson activities. Evidence for this criticism is found in the Smith and Williams report (p.97). One phase of their analysis sought to establish the prime skill emphasis of each lesson. When they compared the stated lesson objective with their own opinion, a coach's opinion,

and the coach trainers' opinion, they discovered that unanimity was rare.

The root of the difficulty lies in the decision to express lesson objectives in terms of student activity rather than in terms of expected behavioural change. For example, the objective of Lesson 5 on "Describing Feelings" is worded thus:

> "Each student looks into each other's eyes to generate feeling and uses VTR feedback to practise using precise terms in describing feelings."

An additional problem is that the objectives do not indicate any criteria for assessing behavioural change.

(10) Appropriateness for the Target Population

On the whole, the language which the coaches are instructed to use is suitable for students at the Basic Education level. The learning load is arranged in small steps, and no complicated projects are proposed until the latter stages of the course, when many problem solving behaviours have been learned and the students have mastered the art of working together as a team.

New behaviours are presented in some concrete form. The modelling of behaviours, the audio-visual aids, the role-playing exercises, the trust activities, and the irrefutable feedback from videotape recording all help the students comprehend ideas that would be lost in a tangle of unheeded verbiage if they were didactically presented.

There are a few examples of a useful kind of "verbal concreteness," in which attention is focussed on specific words and phrases that are useful in given contexts. One example is the build-up in an early lesson of a long list of words that express feelings. These words are then available to the group for talking about their own emotions and the feelings of others during all the subsequent lessons.

Often, the students practise verbal responses by means of role play, as in the lesson on handling drinking problems, but a more intense kind of practice may be needed to help many of the students. Coach responses to the Part One questionnaire, for instance, suggest that the real problem for some Life Skills students, especially young people, may not be addiction but an inability to resist peer pressure. They may need to be drilled in the actual words they can say to refuse a drink in a convincing but non-offensive way, and they may require a good deal of practice in making such refusals under slightly varying conditions of persuasion.

Perusal of the Life Skills Check List in the SNS coaching manual (p.47) will bring to notice other similar, stressful situations in which the knowledge of helpful responses and drill in using them, would prepare students more adequately to transfer their problem solving behaviours from the training setting to real problems in everyday life.

The one area in which the language of SNS lessons is often inappropriate for students at the Basic Education level is the

wording of lesson objectives (cf. Berscheid's experience cited on page 6 of this paper). One cannot be surprised if students, whose highest school grade attended was in the grade 6 to grade 10 range, do not comprehend the lesson objectives that are read to them and written on the flip chart, when they contain phrases like the following:

- "a ranking of measured physical distances" (Lesson 6)
- "uses feedback exchange on behaviour rankings" (Lesson 8)
- "implements a plan to present a product of his own creation" (Lesson 20)
- "scrutinizes a self-portrait using the 'why' skill to specify assumptions about himself" (Lesson 29).

The SNS training strategy of selecting a real problem experienced by one of the students as the vehicle for learning problem solving skills is motivational because it involves the students personally and actively in the subject matter of the course.

Other factors that add to the motivational quality of SNS lessons are:

- the skill objectives have, on the whole, been analyzed into simple behaviours, so that the students have a good chance of being successful and therefore being encouraged to persist;
- the concrete mode of presentation promotes learning success;
- the subject matter, drawn from adult situations, is likely to be within the experience of students at the Basic Education level;

- the activities are ordinarily intrinsically interesting, although it cannot be expected that every student will necessarily enjoy every activity.

SUMMARY

In summary, the methodology and content of the SNS lessons in general reflect the principles of the theoretical model and are appropriate to the needs of the target population.

The major deficiencies are related to course design. The skill objectives are insufficient, in number and level of complexity, to achieve the overall objective, and inadequate provision is made to bring each skill within a student's repertoire.

The lack of a carefully thought-out course design presents a barrier to ongoing development in an orderly and principled manner.

The OCAD Lessons

Since the OCAD lessons have been newly prepared and are therefore not yet well known, a very brief description of their content is included here first, as a background for the critique that follows.

Outline of Lesson Content

One way of categorizing the content according to clusters of skill objectives is to group the lessons into seven sets: attending behaviours, self-awareness, gathering and analyzing data/information, receiving feedback, elementary planning, management, critical thinking.

The first five lessons provide training in ATTENDING BEHAVIOURS: the non-verbal attending behaviours of eye contact and body posture; minimal encouragers and conversational tracking; listening to what is said and paraphrasing it; reflecting the feelings of a conversational partner; using the combined attending behaviours outside the training setting.

In these five lessons, there is a gradual progression from the purely physical, outward manifestations of attention to behaviours that involve the mental powers as well.

The two lessons on "portraying oneself" and "choosing a marriage partner" show a primary emphasis on SELF AWARENESS.

Four lessons deal primarily with certain problem solving skills of GATHERING AND ANALYZING DATA/INFORMATION: brainstorming; analyzing an activity; using rating scales; asking fact-finding questions.

RECEIVING FEEDBACK is the skill objective in five lessons. Four of these treat different kinds of feedback: non-stressful, positive, negative, neutral. A fifth lesson helps the course participants to deal with the feedback from improved attending behaviours.

The four lessons concerning certain problem solving skills of ELEMENTARY PLANNING deal with setting goals; using fact-finding questions to start a plan; making a plan and setting criteria for assessing its successful implementation; evaluating progress in achieving the plan objective and planning necessary readjustments. Two of these lessons are described as offering experience with primary management techniques.

Four lessons give training in MANAGEMENT skills. One deals with explaining to "appropriate others" what one plans to do; another is devoted to the management of resources. A third is really a follow-up of the elementary planning skills group, but since it follows the two management lessons, it may be assumed that the planning activities would be at the higher level of management.

The fourth lesson in this MANAGEMENT group, the final lesson, actually includes exercises that put into practice most of the skills from all the groups, but the main emphasis is on management. Every participant in this "complete work experience" of producing a TV news program has a turn at being both Management and Labour, the point thereby being made that some management skills are also necessary to carry out the role of Labour.

Five lessons compose the CRITICAL THINKING group of skills, and a sixth lesson, on cognition in listening, seems to be a bridge between the elementary skills of attending mentally to spoken language, which was dealt with under attending behaviours, and the skills of thinking critically about all sorts of received information. This lesson develops the skills of listening

with comprehension, not only in the sense of understanding accurately what is said but also of processing mentally through one's own world-view this accurately received information.

The CRITICAL THINKING lessons concern: factual and value claims; assessing the validity of observations made by other people; assumptions and inferences; using assumptions to discover values; fallacies.

Intended Role

The Introduction to the 30 OCAD lessons describes the text as a supplement to the SNS Life Skills Coaching Manual.

The exact type of supplementary role these lessons are intended to fill is not specified. There are clues in the text that suggest they are thought of as a complete course by themselves. Lesson 17, for instance, refers to skills the students "have acquired as a result of following the course from the first lessons in Attending Behaviours," and the Overview of Lesson 30 begins: "This is the final lesson in this programme."

Other clues suggest, on the other hand, that the lessons are intended to be supplementary to the SNS course in the sense of supplying missing training material. The lessons concentrate on life skill objectives that the SNS course omitted or did not bring to the required developmental level.

The only satisfactory way of knowing what sort of supplementary role the OCAD lessons should play is to compare the skill

objectives for which the lesson material has been prepared with a Life Skills course design.

Criteria Related to COURSE DESIGN

(1) Adequacy of Skill Objectives

In the absence of a course design, it is impossible to demonstrate that all the skills necessary for achieving terminal objectives are included in the OCAD lessons and practised to criterion level. Three generalizations can, however, be made.

(a) Training in certain skills, previously identified as important life skills during SNS research, is much more complete and thorough than it is in the SNS materials.

The treatment of attending behaviours illustrates the first generalization very well. Because these behaviours are carefully analyzed in the OCAD lessons, they can be presented one step at a time, in short and effective lessons, with cumulative practice, until learning can be inferred to be within a student's repertoire. From a practical point of view, this analysis into component behaviours makes for a high degree of lesson manageability.

The lessons on receiving feedback, in which the students are trained through many activities to recognize and respond to distinct types of feedback, are another example.

(b) Training in certain skills, omitted almost entirely from the SNS course, is undertaken in the OCAD lessons.

This second generalization is best illustrated by the set of lessons on critical thinking. No serious training in assessing expressed ideas, beliefs and statements is carried out in the SNS lessons, although a foundation is laid by the groups of skills related to the gathering and analysis of data/information.

In the same way, no specific training in management skills is undertaken in the SNS lessons, although the foundation is there in the skills of elementary planning. The OCAD lessons bring together some of the planning skills and develop them further. They formalize an awareness of what management means and how problem solving skills are put to work to serve an individual's purposes. The training activities foster the development of realism and flexibility that contribute to the overall objective of creative problem solving in everyday life.

While the inclusion of training in management increases the adequacy of a life skills course, clear decisions are needed about whether the training should be in self-management, or management of other people, or both. The Introduction uses the term "Self-Management," but some of the lesson material seems to go beyond the skills of managing oneself to the skills of managing other people and things. For instance, in Lesson 21, a coach tells the group: "What the group is going to study now is the way to go about getting other people to participate in helping accomplish whatever one has decided to accomplish." This objective may indeed be part of managing one's personal affairs, but it is not the same as managing oneself. The use of examples

drawn from office management and national resources, in Lesson 22, also suggests a lack of certainty about exactly what management skills are needed in a life skills course.

An explicit course design, stating a management objective clearly in behavioural terms and showing what behaviours are necessary to achieve that complex ability, would clarify the question.

(c) Training in certain skills, previously identified as important life skills during SNS research, is either omitted entirely or is provided to a very limited extent in the OCAD lessons.

An obvious example of this third generalization is the omission in the OCAD lessons of any training in giving feedback. Of course, the lesson plans sometimes call for the students to tell others about their performance of a new behaviour, but the giving of feedback is never made the subject of training.

The sketchy treatment of elementary problem solving skills in the OCAD lessons also illustrates the third generalization. Smith and Williams found that 29 separate behaviours in the SNS problem solving group were prerequisite to the skill of setting specific short and long term personal goals. Many of these 29 skills would therefore be required in OCAD Lesson 11 on teaching the attending behaviours, according to this description of the lesson work:

"Participants set goals for themselves, or, more specifically, their students, and they list, describe, plan and outline the steps necessary to achieve the goals. In stating their goals, participants are asked to be specific about the kind and level of performance they will accept as indicating achievement of the goals. In other words they must indicate the standards by which they will measure the performance of their students."

However, the only problem solving skills taught prior to this lesson are brainstorming and analyzing the elements of a simple task. Even the basic "5W's and an H" questions are introduced in a later lesson.

If it can be assumed that the students using these lessons already have the necessary elementary skills before they enter the Life Skills course, or that the OCAD lesson is intended to be added to the skill training of the SNS lessons, the omission of the foundation skills makes sense. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine a target population that would require a lesson in something as elementary as identifying the 5 W's and an H questions but would not also need prior training in the full range of elementary skills before tackling the planning behaviours detailed in the quotation above.

(2) Adequacy of Skill Development

As a general tendency, training in a behaviour is given at many "levels of learning" in each lesson. That is, in a single lesson, the skill is (a) exposed or used by the coach or other media; (b) explained to the students; (c) discussed by the students; and (d) demonstrated or modelled to the students. In addition, (e) some students, within the group, perform the skill; (f) the coach assists the students in skill performance; and (g) each student performs the skill. (Smith and Williams, p.87)

Often, each student assists a peer in skill performance. Sometimes, the lesson plans that each student will perform the

skill away from the group. In the case of the attending behaviours, each student, away from the group, helps another person to perform the skill, but that occurs as part of a separate lesson.

It is at this point that the skill can be inferred to be within a student's repertoire.

The advantage of including training activities at most of the learning levels in one lesson is that it is easy to check that practice has been provided at each stage. A practical disadvantage is that there may not be enough reinforcement of the learned behaviours over a period of time.

In order to trace development for those skills that do not receive practice beyond the point at which each student performs the skill within the group, it would be necessary to search for places in subsequent lessons where that skill is put into use and record the levels of exposure and practice on a chart.

(3) Logical Sequence

In general, the OCAD lessons have been aranged in an order of increasing skill complexity. The first lessons deal with simple attending behaviours, and the last lesson is an extensive project that demands complex management skills.

The block of critical thinking lessons, however, is not clearly shown to be part of the process of skill integration. Somehow it is isolated from the rest of the lessons, perhaps because the emphasis is on knowledge of a subject more than on skills.

It seems likely that the present, temporary Table of Contents lists the lessons in an order that was not intended. The objective of Lesson 6, for example, involves identifying inconsistencies between the students' idealized selves and the behaviour goals they had chosen previously, yet no work on selecting a goal is contained in the previous five lessons. Similarly, Lesson 22 on managing resources is described in the Overview as "the first in a series of lessons on Management," but the preceding lesson is given a Management title, and the coach tells the group in the Stimulus that they will "continue" to study the problems of management.

(4) Expression of the Overall Objective

Throughout the OCAD lessons the students are constantly being made aware of the value the new skills will have for their lives in helping them understand themselves better, maintain more effective relations with other people, and be more in control of their lives.

Furthermore, two aspects of the Life Skills definition - appropriate and responsible use of problem solving skills - receive some explicit attention. Lessons on feedback, for example, deal with the appropriateness of behavioural responses. In the lesson on using assumptions to discover values, the participants are introduced to the morality/prudence tests of validity, described here as responsibility to others and responsibility to self. The last phrase sounds remarkably like Balanced Self-Determined behaviour.

It is a phrase in the Introduction to the OCAD lessons that casts a shadow of doubt on how the overall objective is interpreted: "We try to impart the idea: if you keep your wits about you, you can be a winner, too."

To the typical Life Skills student portrayed in Part One, "winning" would be likely to signify some event, such as getting a job that pays enough money to support the family, or passing an examination, or finding places in a day care centre for the children, or - literally - winning a lottery. Happy endings like those are not within the power of a Life Skills course. If students were given the idea that taking Life Skills training will make them winners, their expectations might be cruelly dashed. There may not be any jobs to be had during a period of economic recession; the examination may be beyond the individual's capabilities; the waiting list for the day care centre may be very long.

Questioning this interpretation of the Life Skills training objective is by no means a criticism of the methodological use of reward and praise for actual learning achievements. On the contrary, the spirit of encouraging support and delight in skill development that pervades the OCAD lessons strengthens their motivating power. The "first annual Winnie Awards" presentation in Lesson 10, for instance, is an imaginative and exciting concrete demonstration of the group's interest in each individual member's improved attending behaviours; it provides an opportunity for each individual to be highlighted as someone of importance; and it is a cleverly designed training activity for practising

the gracious acceptance of a compliment and for speaking briefly to an assembled group. It is not methodology that is in question, but the underlying purpose of Life Skills training that will be conveyed to the students.

"The Life Skills goal of changing the student's approach to life" (Warren[a], p.120) concerns internal growth and is thus opposite to an implied promise of getting something that may be outside the scope of personal control. Life Skills theory shows the overall objective to be the development of Balanced Self-Determined persons creatively solving problems in everyday life. It is an ideal towards which individuals can come closer whether they fail or succeed in attaining some particular prize.

"Winning, like happiness, is a by-product of being creative. Of doing good things - regardless" (Williams, p.18). Those are the words of an historian, but they could have been written about Life Skills. Life Skills students may not be able to grasp the meaning, however, until they have some experience of the creative approach to life themselves.

Criteria Related to TRAINING METHODOLOGY

(5) Development of a Learning Group

The training activities of the OCAD lessons are planned to take place within a group. The group sometimes is divided for exercises into dyads or committees. The participants practise new behaviours within their group before they are asked to try

them outside the training setting or to teach them to others.

There are references in the text that point to important qualities of group relationships. In Lesson 6, for instance, the sharing of intimate inner thought is said to be one step in learning to trust the group and feel close to one another; in Lesson 14 the coach is directed to encourage an atmosphere of mutual help, reminding the group that they are helping each other to make progress in life.

It is not easy to trace the growth of the helping function through the lessons, however. One reason may be simply that the order of lessons has not been finally settled. Also, since the lessons have not yet been used experimentally, there has been no opportunity to test the effect of the training activities on bringing a collection of individuals to life as a group.

(6) Cyclical Learning Process

Every lesson in the OCAD set contains plans for some kind of active participation by the students. In the earlier lessons, the students respond actively in all three domains of the content dimension: cognitive (thinking), affective, psychomotor. Throughout the lessons the students are encouraged to recognize and accept their emotions. Lesson activities are planned for self exploration so that self understanding can develop.

The alternation of active skill practice and feedback to skill practice is not so consistent. The earliest lessons on

attending behaviours provide for feedback and reflection on the feedback; so does Lesson 6 on portraying oneself. The "gong" used to stop premature judgements during brainstorming is a very concrete variety of feedback.

In many lessons, however, feedback is not an integral part of the plan. For example, no planned feedback is evident in the lessons on rating scales, teaching the attending behaviours, surveying marketable skills, 5 W's and an H questions, and so on.

The point is that feedback has a double function in a Life Skills course. As life skills to be acquired, the abilities of giving and receiving feedback are objectives of the curriculum. But feedback also has an indispensable function in the training process. In order to learn and perfect skills, the students need feedback on their attempts to perform the behaviours. It is this training function of feedback that is most often missing from the OCAD lessons. This omission can be illustrated, paradoxically, by the lessons devoted to the receiving of feedback. The plans for teaching students to differentiate the various types, and to make appropriate responses, are interesting and thorough, but there is no plan for the students to get feedback on the way they perform the skills.

If videotape recording were shown to be a regular feature of the lessons, so that the students became accustomed to using it and learning from it, feedback in its training function could become a natural part of every lesson.

(7) Development of Critical Evaluation Powers

There is a strong emphasis on evaluation in the OCAD lessons. Almost every one contains a final Evaluation section, with thoughtful questions prepared to provoke reflection on what has been done and achieved. An exception is Lesson 29, which seems to stop at the Skill Application.

Some of the training in systematic evaluation is particularly valuable. An example is the insistence that the students constantly check themselves during problem solving exercises to be sure that their proposed behaviour goals are really solutions to the defined problem.

The critical thinking lessons offer students guiding principles for making logical decisions. These lessons answer the need for training in skills to assess the validity of information, skills which are necessary for working towards the overall objective.

From the viewpoint of the theoretical model, however, their position almost at the end of the set of lessons is undesirable. The model shows that Life Skills students need to evaluate continually their total response to the course and especially to the new behaviours they are learning. They need to evaluate the data while they are being cognitively processed and causing cognitive restructuring to take place. What is required is that training in the guiding principles begins early enough in a Life Skills course so that the students can take advantage of their sharpened thinking skills by putting them to work in evaluating the new data of the training program.

It may be argued that the critical thinking lessons are difficult and should therefore be postponed until near the end of a course. Actually, they are difficult mainly because a great deal is tackled all at once and in a predominantly academic style. Instead of being analyzed into component behaviours, which could be dealt with as small steps from time to time, critical thinking is taught in lessons containing an enormous amount of material, requiring the coach to make complicated presentations.

The lesson on fallacies is a case in point. More than 20 types of fallacies are included. Except for the practice in listening with mental attention, there is little or nothing in the preceding lessons on attending behaviours, feedback, self study, planning and management to make the students any better prepared to spot fallacies in claims than they were at the beginning of the course.

Here is a situation where the standard five-phase lesson plan could usefully be abandoned in favour of a series of mini-lessons (proposed originally in the Smith-Williams report), each concerned with one or possibly two fallacies, or rules for assessing observations, and so on. Work on critical thinking could then be begun, at an easy pace, near the start of a Life Skills course. Then the students could be gradually trained to check their own claims and observations during training.

At any rate, in some way or other the skills in this valuable section should be made available for student use during training, so that they become built in to the Life Skills integration process.

Criteria Related to the LESSON CONTENT

(8) The Personal Domain

The subject matter of most OCAD lessons concentrates on personal affairs. This is true not only in the lessons closely related to Self, but also in the work on planning, management and critical thinking.

The originally composed subject matter that concerns skills in the five areas of life responsibility - Self, Family, Leisure, Community, Job - is so vivid and pertinent that it sets a standard at which all the material in the lessons should be aimed.

That is the kind of subject matter that keeps the lessons within the realm of life skills. To the extent that the subject matter of illustrations, examples and exercises moves outside the personal domain, the lessons become more like schoolroom studies. Sometimes the line between subject matter that is relevant to the development of life skills and subject matter that is merely perhaps of interest to people is not easy to draw; in that case, the difference is probably not significant. Occasionally, however, the subject matter is quite remote from life skills in the personal domain.

For example, the Evocation in Lesson 22 begins with a discussion of Canada's national resources; later, the students are guided in a discussion that includes the topic of food processing a century ago. One audiotape script from which the students are to answer a series of questions is on the refraction of light.

In brainstorming practice, the students volunteer suggestions about what can be done with a brick, coat hangers, telephone book, saucepan, and so on. The exercise is interesting and probably useful as one step of a lesson, but it is not well directed to the skill of brainstorming for solving a personal problem.

(9) Clarity of Behavioural Objectives

Most of the lesson objectives are stated behaviourally in terms of what the student will be able to do by the end of the lesson.

In a few lessons, however, the wording of objectives shifts from the students' point of view. There is sometimes a conflict between the life skill objectives that could be located in a charted course design and the actions that will take place in a lesson so that skills can be learned. For example, the first objective of Lesson 29 is stated thus:

> "By the end of the lesson, group members, working in dyads, will be able to make up a 'commercial' using both fallacious and non-fallacious means."

This is really more a statement of lesson activity, cast into behavioural terminology, than it is a life skill in a curriculum leading to a life skill terminal objective. Presumably, the ability to compose a commercial, whether fallacious or not, is not a necessary behavioural skill in a life skills course.

(10) Appropriateness for the Target Population

The Life Skills Integration Model claims that Life Skills training for the target population should be based on concrete experiences so that the superficial content can be readily grasped and an exploration of the significance can commence.

Many of the concrete experiences planned for the OCAD lessons are audio-visual resources. Most of the scripts for these are creative gems that cannot fail to get their message across. They depict real life situations with observational accuracy. The language in conversations is idiomatic and unerringly in character. The scripts are funny, with a serious purpose. Some of the outstanding examples are:

Lesson 13: a film clip showing "good and bad" scenarios about a man who will be late for dinner, again!

Lesson 18: a series of short film clips concerning positive feedback;

Lesson 24: several audiotapes for practice in listening with cognition, the longest and most appropriate of which is "Talk It Up," a panel show in which mugging is discussed by a judge, a victim and an ex-convict.

The masterpiece of the OCAD lessons, the videotaped playlet, "Don't Mix Me Up," is a hilarious dramatization in which the members of a family, seated around a breakfast table, commit a multitude of offenses against logical thought.

Concreteness is not limited to scripted audio-visual resources. One of the activities planned for the lesson on rating scales involves the eating and rating of pies. An exercise in the attending behaviour lesson on reflecting the feelings of other people calls for photographs to be matched with fragments of expressive language.

These examples of concreteness have the added value of being imaginative; they provide, therefore, the important ingredient of motivation, because they are intrinsically interesting.

A verbal type of concreteness is the drill in actual words that are appropriate to certain life situations.

One type of concrete experience that is lacking in most lessons is "concrete feedback" by means of videotape recording.

Life Skills lessons must also be appropriate to the Basic Education level characteristic of the target population. In this respect, some of the OCAD lessons miss the mark. Most notable in this regard are the critical thinking lessons, in which abstract ideas are taught by the coach in a didactic style that is different from the teaching style in the other lessons. The learning load is heavy for the students, and the teaching task is complicated for the coach.

Some of the illustrative material selected for Evocation or Skill Practice phases of these lessons depends on knowledge from school courses. For instance, one of the illustrations that is supposed to help the students understand the reason for using the word <u>claim</u> instead of <u>truth</u> concerns Newton's discovery

of the law of gravity. The coach makes explanations in Lesson 26 by talking about equipment for expert observation, such as stethoscopes, microscopes, radioscopes and electronic telescopes. The videotape script entitled "You Were There" in the same lesson serves its purpose very well as material for practice in the rules of assessing observations, and it is most interestingly written, but the subject matter of archeology requires some background of school knowledge, and the level of language usage is appropriate for persons already in possession of a secondary school education.

The use of difficult language and situations remote from the students' personal experience detracts from the motivational quality of the lessons.

Summary

The main positive qualities of the OCAD lessons are the inclusion of training in life skills objectives that are omitted from the SNS course, the development of certain life skills to be within the repertoire of students, and the lively creative imagination that informs most of the training activities.

It is difficult to see how the OCAD lessons can form a complete course by themselves that would be appropriate for a target population found among CEC clients. In combination with the SNS lessons, however, the value of both would be enhanced.

In any case, if the OCAD lessons were perfected and published as a complete Life Skills course, the SNS course would be deprived of much skill training it needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A study of the SNS Life Skills Coaching Manual and the OCAD lessons in the light of student needs and the theoretical model prompts the following recommendations:

(1) As a priority, the terminal behaviours of the Life Skills course should be precisely determined and formulated, and the behavioural skills necessary to achieve those terminal goals should be charted in hierarchical order, as a course design.

It is anticipated that in the accomplishment of this task, behavioural objectives additional to those already represented in the SNS course and the OCAD lessons will be identified: for example, the skills of appropriate and responsible assertiveness (which is one way of partially describing the overall objective of Balanced Self-Determined behaviour) have not been specified previously, and presentation skills have been insufficiently analyzed.

With a clearly drawn hierarchical statement of skill objectives, the ongoing development of the Life Skills course can proceed in an orderly and principled way, as new insights are gained.

(2) Both the SNS lessons of the Life Skills Coaching Manual and the OCAD lessons should be viewed as training materials needed to fulfill the objectives of the Life Skills course design.

(3) The development of each behavioural skill should be traced through the SNS and OCAD lessons to ensure that all the skills are sufficiently practised to justify the inference that they are within the repertoire of students.

(4) Additional lessons should be developed to train students in skills which the course design reveals to be still inadequately treated.

(5) The OCAD lessons should be modified in several ways:

(a) The lessons should be written in such a way that they are appropriate to the educational level of the target population, which appears to be Basic Education.

(b) Videotape recording should be used regularly in the lessons.

(c) As much of the subject matter as possible should concern personal affairs likely to be within the experience of the target population.

(d) The lesson objectives should be written from the students' point of view in terms of behavioural change relevant to the behaviours of the course design.

(6) The plans for audio-visual resources in the OCAD lessons should be implemented and, if possible, augmented, as the Life Skills lessons would benefit from even more such audio-visual resources, of various types.

(7) A set of guidelines for the best ways of fitting the OCAD lessons and the SNS course together should be prepared,

with care being exercised not to weaken the SNS model for fostering the growth of a helping group.

(8) A brief manual for coaches should be prepared to provide information about the Life Skills course design and advice about using the OCAD and SNS lessons together.

(9) A plan should be made for experimental trials of the OCAD lessons to test their effectiveness for skill development and their manageability by the coaches.

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